USA $12.99 EUROPE €11.99 2017#7 WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM

NEW IN CHESS

READ BY CLUB PLAYERS IN 116 COUNTRIES

Star analysis

Wesley So
Ding Liren
Vladimir Fedoseev
Peter Heine Nielsen
Peter Svidler
Bu Xiangzhi
Anish Giri

Magnus Carlsen hits back in Isle of Man

Genna Sosonko
When Viktor met Bobby

Your SOS Guide
to the World Cup

When knights
are octopuses

Judit Polgar on
Richard Rapport

Nigel Short
From Botswana to Swaziland

Maximize your tactics

World Cup winner

Levon Aronian

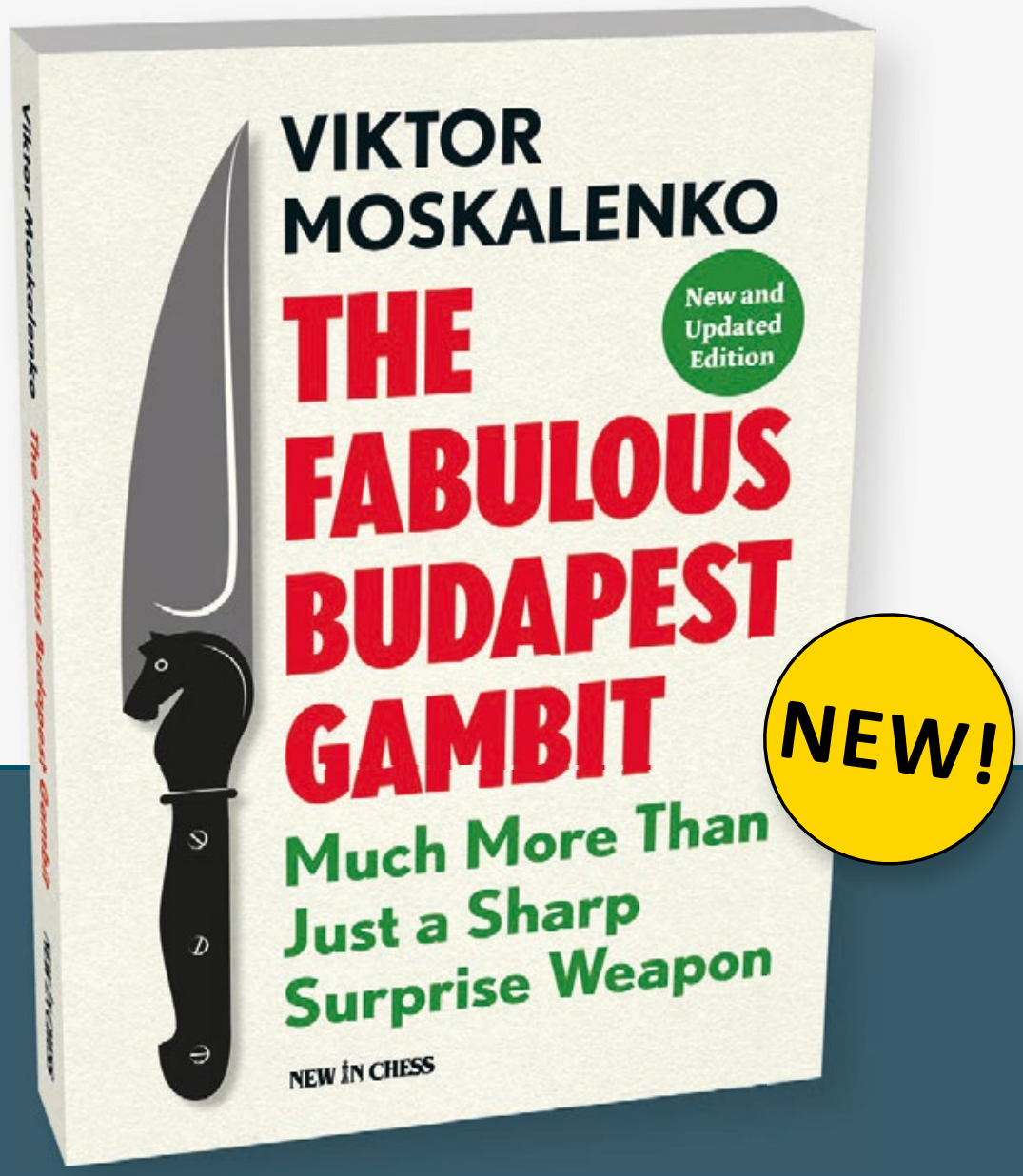
What a year!

CAPA GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

BUT DID NOT FIND WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR

ISBN 978-90-5691-735-7

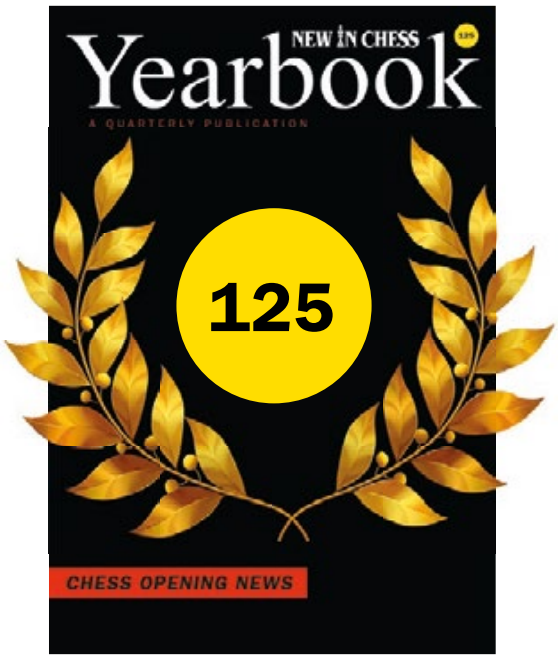
Hundreds of improvements, alternatives and new ideas



Viktor Moskalenko has completely reworked, updated and extended his much-loved and best-selling first book. All games and introductions have been revisited, there are updates and, where necessary, expansions in every chapter, eighteen games have been replaced by new ones, countless improvements and new ideas are included, and nearly 50 extra pages have been added. Besides, Moskalenko presents proof that the Fajarowicz Gambit is entirely playable!

paperback | 288 pages | €27.95 | available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com | a NEW IN CHESS publication

COMING SOON!



Anniversary Issue #125

Your Chess Opening News Quarterly is about to reach another milestone! In December we will publish Issue #125, and to celebrate this anniversary the Yearbook editors are preparing a Collector's Issue (with lots of extra pages) you can't afford to miss.

There will be plenty of extras in Yearbook 125:

- The definitive opening statistics of the past 25 years
- Top players confess: "My biggest opening blunder, ever"
- Glenn Flear: The best books of the past 25 Yearbook issues
- A special report by Editor-in-chief Jan Timman: The twist and turns in Magnus Carlsen's repertoire, explained

"Chess players who regularly study the Yearbook can save money because there will be many opening books they don't need to buy"—*Rochade Europa Magazine*

NEW IN CHESS
Yearbook
A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
Hikaru Nakamura: blow for blow in the Najdorf
★ Wesley So copies and wins in the Symmetrical English
★ David Anton lashes out as Black with the Chigorin Ruy Lopez
★ How did Praggnanandhaa tackle the Barry Attack?
★ Markus Ragger goes mad with 6...g5 in the Two Knights
★ And dozens of other ideas to refresh your repertoire
CHESS OPENING NEWS
Yearbook
Wesley So: black magic in the Catalan
CHESS OPENING NEWS

The Digital Edition

Many people have asked what took us so long, but it is now really going to happen! We are just a couple of weeks away from launching the digital edition of the Yearbook. That means that from then on you will be able to read and study the Yearbook on your iPad or Android device. You will be able to replay all the moves on the interactive chess viewer, so you will no longer need a board and set to refresh your opening repertoire.

Your opening preparation at tournaments will be better and easier since you will be able to bring all your Yearbooks without breaking your back. At the launch of the digital edition in the beginning of December we will make all back issues of 2015, 2016 and 2017 immediately available – free for all subscribers. Stay tuned!

Get it on Google play Soon available on iPad and Android Available on the App Store

Opening ideas – Novelties – Book Reviews – Theory – Discussions – Gambits

Download the New In Chess app:

- get early access to every issue
- follow every move on the built-in board
- now also available for PC (Windows 8/10)!

Read New In Chess on your tablet, smartphone or PC, two weeks before the printed edition is available, and replay all the moves in the interactive chess viewer

You can now download the digital edition of New In Chess on your tablet, phone or PC and read all the stories immediately after publication. By simply tapping on the games you can replay the moves on the interactive chessviewer. So from now on you don't need a board and set to fully enjoy what top grandmasters have to say about their games! The New In Chess app installs in seconds, has all the right features and is easy to operate. We have made an entire issue available as a FREE DOWNLOAD on your iPhone, iPad, Android device or PC.

Get it on Google play

The chess magazine that moves

Now available on iPhone, iPad, Android and PC

Watch the video at www.newinchess.com/video

Available on the App Store

CHESSBASE ACCOUNT:

Access the world of ChessBase from wherever you are 24/7!

PLAYCHESS
The ultimate chess experience

LIVE DATABASE
Professional research: 8 million games online

MY GAMES CLOUD
Your one-stop cloud storage area

FRITZ ONLINE
Your browser-based chess engine

VIDEOS
Private Masterclasses

OPENINGS
Welcome to modern opening preparation

TRAINING
Calculate, sacrifice, mate

ENGINE CLOUD
Top engine on the best hardware

LET'S CHECK
Knowledge is mate: 200 million analyses

CB NEWS
The world-renowned chess news portal

HOUDINI 6

Houdini 6 continues where its predecessor left off, and adds solid 60 Elo points to this formidable engine, once again making Houdini the strongest chess program currently available on the market.

With Houdini 6, you not only gain in terms of computing power, but also in terms of time! The new engine delivers better performance even if you only let it calculate for half as long as the previous version! Houdini 6 has been put to the test in various areas and thoroughly refined in all the right places: position evaluation, search, time management and use of the endgame tablebases have been improved, as has parallel processing. Houdini 6 delivers particularly exceptional results on systems with a large number of CPUs, and can run up to 128 threads on high-end hardware.

The enhanced "Tactical mode" transforms Houdini 6 into the most ingenious position solver of all time and improves again on the records held by previous versions in tactical benchmark tests. In addition, "Tactical mode" can now also be assigned an exact number of threads, giving you additional flexibility.

Despite all the detailed technical improvements, Houdini has kept its creative and imaginative style of play, and where other programs see no future or are locked into a draw, Houdini delivers surprise after surprise with hidden resources. You can certainly look forward to using this latest version of the true wizard among the chess programs!

INCLUDED IN THE SCOPE OF SUPPLY:

- Houdini 6 engine (Standard or Pro)
- Fritz 15 user interface
- Premium membership for playchess.com and your ChessBase Account (6 months)
- Online access to the world's largest analysis database, "Let's Check", with over 200 million deeply analyzed positions (6 months)

HOUDINI 6 STANDARD **79,90 €**

The multiprocessor engine can use up to 8 cores and 4 GB of RAM.

HOUDINI 6 PRO **99,90 €**

The Pro version can run on up to 128 cores and use 128 GB of memory and is the right choice for high-end users with powerful hardware.

Available end of October 2017

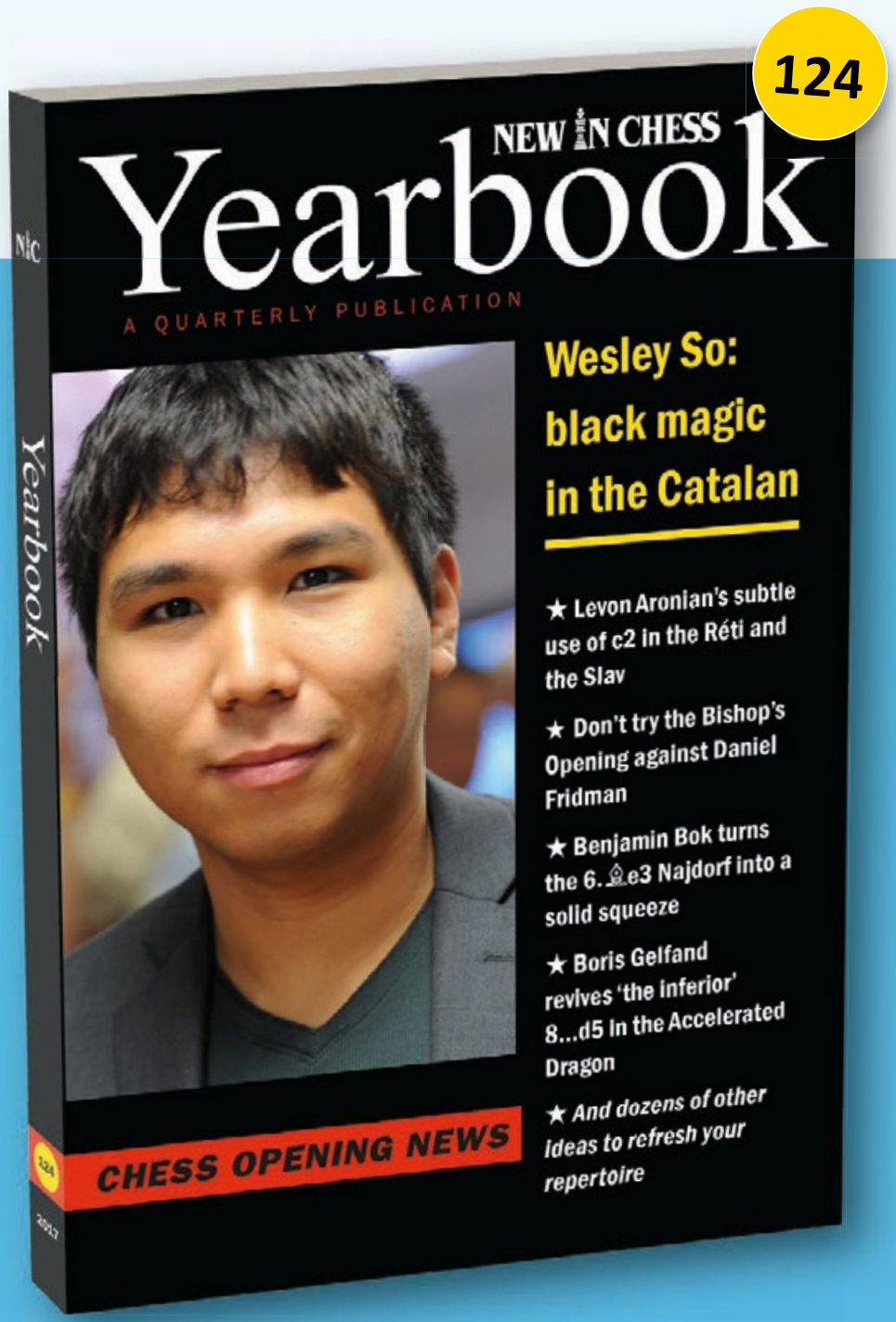
System requirements

Minimum: Minimum: Pentium IV hyperthreading, 2 GB RAM, Windows 7/8, DirectX9, graphics card with 256 MB RAM, DVD-ROM drive, Windows Media Player 9 and internet access.
Recommended: PC Intel i5 (Quadcore), 8 GB RAM, Windows 10 or 8.1, DirectX10, graphics card with 512 MB RAM or more, 100% DirectX10-compatible sound card, Windows Media Player 11, DVD-ROM drive and internet access.

ChessBase GmbH · News: en.chessbase.com · CB Shop: shop.chessbase.com
CHESSBASE DEALER: NEW IN CHESS · P.O. Box 1093 · NL-1810 KB Alkmaar
phone (+31)72 5127137 · fax (+31)72 5158234 · WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM

“There is something about nearly every opening one can think of.”

British Chess Magazine


124
NEW IN CHESS
Yearbook
A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
Wesley So: black magic in the Catalan
★ Levon Aronian's subtle use of c2 in the Réti and the Slav
★ Don't try the Bishop's Opening against Daniel Fridman
★ Benjamin Bok turns the 6.♗e3 Najdorf into a solid squeeze
★ Boris Gelfand revives 'the inferior' 8...d5 in the Accelerated Dragon
★ And dozens of other ideas to refresh your repertoire
CHESS OPENING NEWS

★ *New layout for even better accessibility*

★ *New columnist: Victor Bologan*

★ *Lots of instructional exercises*

With answers to urgent questions such as:

- **What is Levon Aronian’s idea behind 6.♕c2 in the Réti?**
- **What went wrong in three games with the Bishop’s Opening against Fridman at the European Championship?**
- **Has Boris Gelfand proved 8...d5 in the Accelerated Dragon to be playable again?**
- **With what surprise in the Short Variation of the Caro-Kann did Richard Rapport give Pentala Harikrishna a hard time?**
- **Where should White put his queen’s knight in the Italian?**
- **Why is Evgeny Tomashevsky so successful with 6.♗c4 in the Symmetrical English?**
- **How does Wesley So deal with Black’s structure problems in the Open Catalan?**
- **Has the Gothenburg Variation in the Najdorf finally been refuted?**
- **What are the latest trends in the Vienna Game with 3.g3 ?**
- **Can White play without a2-a3 in the Blackburne QGD?**
- **How do Alexander Grischuk and Magnus Carlsen deal with the Slav Exchange with 4.♗g5 ?**
- **Is Black still OK after the pawn sac 6...c5 in the 4.♗g5 Grünfeld Indian?**
- **What are the latest trends in the Fianchetto KI?**
- **How does Vidit Gujrathi meet the London System? How should Black deal with Benjamin Bok’s concept of 11.♘h4 in the 6.♗e3 Najdorf?**
- **What is Black’s new super idea against the QGA with 3.e4 ?**
- **What are the latest developments in the ‘Mouse Slip’ Variation of the Tarrasch French?**
- **Is the paradoxical 5...h6 in the Smyslov Variation of the Caro-Kann Defence playable?**

Paperback | 256 pages | € 29.95
available at your local (chess)bookseller
or at newinchess.com

2017#7
NEW IN CHESS

Contents

'The game will be with you till the end of your days.'

8 Rites of Passage
Lloyd Lillie's chess-themed sculpture in Washington's John Marshall Park tells a father-and-son story familiar to many of us.

10 NIC's Café
Solve a 'simple' chess puzzle and become a millionaire. Saddam Hussein's private chess set returns to Iraq. And an unexpected solution to stop panic attacks.

13 Your Move
Garry Kasparov's political ideology and a question about Heath Ledger's alleged chess prowess.

14 Underperforming
At the World Cup a substantial number of elite players performed (well) below their rating. What does that mean?

15 Fair & Square
Why did Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States, give up chess?

16 Aronian wins World Cup
In Georgia's capital Tbilisi, physical fitness, mental resilience and a close-knit team were the pillars of Levon Aronian's fully deserved success. Not for the first time this year the Armenian outperformed World Champion Magnus Carlsen. His fans have reason to believe that he is closer to his biggest dream than ever.

25 Celeb64: Gregory Peck

52 Profile: Levon Aronian
Mark Glukhovsky writes about Levon Aronian's search for spiritual comfort. A personal profile of a dear friend.

56 Secrets of Opening Surprises
The World Cup in Tbilisi was the perfect place to have a number of SOS ideas up your sleeve.

60 Capa goes to Hollywood
In the glamorous world of film stars and moguls, the chess champ was chasing his own dream. In vain. Bruce Monson takes us back to a memorable visit that may not have brought Capablanca what he was hoping for but produced a wealth of stories.

70 Magnus says 'relax'
The World Champion entered the rapidly growing Open on the Isle of Man, hungry for chess after his brief sojourn in Tbilisi. With a relaxed approach, both free-wheeling and energetic, he was the fully deserved winner of the £50,000 first prize.

87 Maximize Your Tactics
Find the right moves.

88 When Viktor met Bobby
For the last time. A hitherto unknown letter explains why Kortchnoi lost his wish to see Fischer.

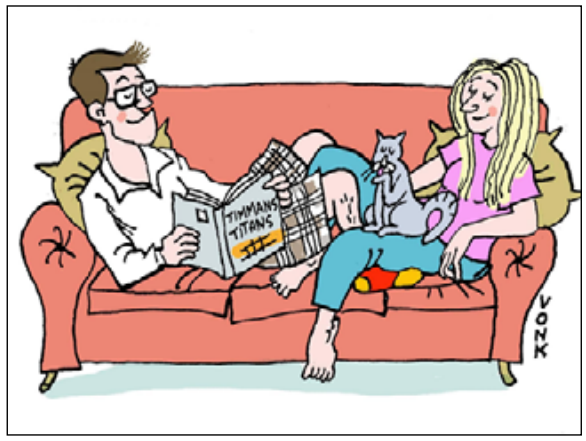
94 Chess Pattern Recognition
You remember Kasparov's mighty octopus on d3. There are more.

96 Diamonds Are Forever
Nigel Short teaches you a thing or two about Botswana and Lesotho.

98 Judit Polgar's column
Richard Rapport's returning dilemma: 1.b3 or not b3?

102 Sadler on Books
Matthew Sadler allots five stars to two biographical works about brilliant and tragic heroes of our game.

106 Just Checking
Who is 'Miro's' favourite chess player of all time?



CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE
Alina l'Ami, Jeroen Bosch, Vladimir Fedoseev, Anish Giri, Mark Glukhovsky, John Henderson, Ding Liren, Dylan McClain, Evgeny Miroshnichenko, Bruce Monson, Ashot Nadanian, Peter Heine Nielsen, Maxim Notkin, Arthur van de Oudeweetering, Matthew Sadler, Nigel Short, Wesley So, Genna Sosonko, Peter Svidler, Jan Timman, Bu Xiangzhi

SUBSCRIPTIONS: p. 90 COLOPHON: p. 13

Rites of Passage

Lloyd Lillie (1932) is a well-known American artist whose works include sculptures of Presidents John Quincy Adams and Thomas Jefferson, and many other public figures, in commissions located in libraries, parks, colleges and universities across the United States.

A splendid 1983 commission with a chess-theme can be found in John Marshall Park in the Judiciary Square neighborhood of Washington, D.C. The park honours John Marshall, Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court from 1801-1835, but when Lillie was approached there already was a large and imposing bronze statue of Marshall dressed in long judicial robes and seated in his courtroom chair.

Lillie was tasked though not to further replicate the former chief justice, but instead to immortalize his passion for playing chess in the park. In his research, the sculptor discovered that Marshall had been taught to play chess by his father, and fondly remembered how he himself had also gone through this rite of passage by learning to play chess from his father, and likewise teaching his own son to play.

So in one eureka moment, Lillie had the brainwave of two bronze figures playing chess on a granite bench ledge, entitled 'The Chess Players', but modelled the older figure on his own father and the younger, middle-aged figure on his own son, uniting all three of them forever through chess.

Photo © Raymond Fudge

NIC's Café

The Turing enigma

Almost 150 letters by computer pioneer Alan Turing – the Bletchley Park Enigma code-breaker immortalized by Benedict Cumberbatch in the Hollywood blockbuster *The Imitation Game* – were unearthed recently in a disused storeroom at the University of Manchester. The letters date from early 1949 to 1954, when Turing took his own life, and bring to light some of his thoughts on subjects

A sculpture of Alan Turing by Stephen Kettle at Bletchley Park.

he was researching at Manchester, including artificial intelligence, computing and mathematics.

When the discovery was publicized, prominent among the cache could be spotted a letter dated 16th November 1951, coming from the redoubtable BH Wood, editor, founder and publisher of the magazine *Chess*.

In 1944, Turing – regarded by historians to be the father of theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence – had talked of 'building a brain'; a dream he would work on during those early post-War years after he moved to Manchester. There, four years before the first 'stored program' computer had even been invented, Turing – using only paper, pencil and his own brain-power – successfully created a chess computer program that prefigured AI.

In his letter to Turing, BH Wood was responding to various reports at the time in the press 'about a proposed "chess match" between your machine and Princeton University' (which, from an historical prospective, would have been the first public chess match between humans and a computer).

The proposed match with Princeton University never materialized, but in Manchester in 1952, Turing's 'paper machine' lost to one of his colleagues, Alick Glennie, in the first recorded Man vs. Machine chess match. The rest, as they say – and perhaps as Garry Kasparov would testify to – is history.

Who wants to be a millionaire?

In a modern-day parallel with the Alan Turing story, news broke in the same week that scientists from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, had thrown down a million-dollar gauntlet to computer programmers to find a solution to a 'simple' chess puzzle.

The puzzle, which dates back to 1850, challenges a player to place eight queens on a standard chessboard so that no two queens could attack each other. The puzzle has been completed on a standard chess board, but once the board increases dramatically in size no computer programme can solve it.

Professor Ian Gent and his colleagues of the University of St Andrews, senior research fellow Dr Peter Nightingale and reader Dr Christopher Jefferson, first became involved in the puzzle when a friend challenged the good professor to solve it over Facebook. The team found that once the chess board had reached 1,000 by 1,000 squares computer programmes could no longer cope with the number of variables. Any programme capable of solving an enhanced version of the famous 'Queens Puzzle' would be so powerful it could solve impossible tasks such as decrypting the toughest security on the Internet. They reckon that the financial rewards reaped from a program that can solve the puzzle would be immense, particularly for technological companies.

Prof Ian Gent and Dr Peter Nightingale with only two queens.

Return to sender

The Elgin Marbles have often been the subject of arguments over ownership between the Greek and British governments. And for those in the know, the head of one of the horses of Selene on view in the British Museum were the inspiration for Nathaniel Cook's knight design for his famous 1849 Staunton chess set.

The black pieces of Saddam Hussein's ornate 'private' chess set.

While the Elgin Marbles won't be heading home any day soon, good news comes that another looted chess-themed artefact has finally found its way home again: Saddam Hussein's antique chess set that was stolen during the 2003 United States invasion of Iraq.

Numerous thefts of Iraqi antiquities, including belongings to the executed despot leader, occurred following the US invasion. Years later, auction houses in the US reported a rise in Saddam-era artefacts turning up for sale. These were traced back

to US government employees and contractors who took them as souvenirs or war trophies from museums and palaces – and Saddam's 'personal' chess set was discovered during this illegal auction house haul.

In early September, the US Embassy in Iraq shared the news on social media that the outlandish antique chess set – said to be priceless – has now officially been returned to Qais Rasheed, the deputy minister of Culture for Antiquities and Heritage Affairs.

Medieval Magnus

It's the question everyone has asked: Just how on earth did Magnus Carlsen become such a good player from a small country with no real chess notoriety? Well, could the answer be influenced by what's actually to be found *in* the

Medieval Magnus' favourite piece?

earth in the World Champion's birth town of Tønsberg?

For there, during a two-month excavation, archaeologists recently unearthed an unusual chess piece that they believe dates back to the 1200s. They found the chess piece between an old burned down floor just a few feet from the ground of their dig – but what makes it particularly special is that project manager Lars Haugesten from the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research claims that the piece is Arabic-inspired and therefore something of a rarity for the region during that particular era.

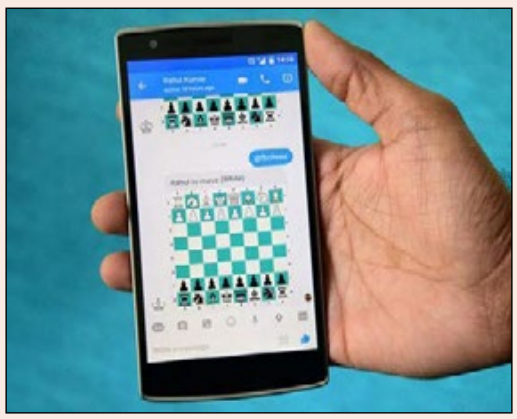
Chess came to Norway circa 1000 AD from the Middle East, says Haugesten. The lone knight – which is called a 'chip' in Arabic – is yet to be properly examined, but thought to be made from antlers and likely filled with lead. And with it being exquisitely decorated, they further believe it to have once belonged to someone of high status, as it was found close to Slottsfjellet and the former palace there. And yes, when prompted by the media, Haugesten did suggest he hoped that the piece once belonged to the medieval Magnus Carlsen!

Don't panic!

If we are to believe the white-coated boffins armed with a clipboard, then playing chess could be a simple method of preventing or stopping panic attacks. Yes, that's right, our game could be a cure-all for those sudden intense surges of anxiety and physical symptoms ranging from sweating, dizziness and trembling to faster heart-rate and a shortness of breath (that does sound like time-trouble in a winning position against a higher-rated opponent, doesn't it?).

Research has shown that playing chess on a smartphone app can stave off symptoms of panic disorder, which the experts claim affects about one person in fifty globally.

It is thought that analysing several moves acts as a clever distraction technique, which diverts the attack. 'Playing chess on a smartphone can completely cure panic attacks if used properly', claims Iranian education scientist Kazem Barzegar in the latest issue of the *Asian Journal Of Psychiatry*. But it is not as easy as all that, as he helpfully adds: 'The right choice of difficulty level has a great impact on the result of treatment.'



No panic, I'm on the phone!

Picnic at Hanging Rook

So maybe it's time for a chess picnic. A what? Chess picnic is the brainchild of Turkish artist Mehmet Kizilkaya and so called because he derived it from his many pleasant childhood memories of fun family picnics with

Chess picnic: win or lose, you win!

friends, where everyone would bring something to the occasion, whether that be preparing the food, providing the drinks, or perhaps even a song or two that would allow for everyone to be involved in having a good time.

Chess picnic has almost the same rules as ordinary chess. All the pieces start in the same squares and they move in the same way... the only difference being that it is played with an odd numbers of players who take turns in making moves for both White and Black! So with that in mind, the game then becomes free from winning and losing. Players are no more opponents, but they all contribute to the process being members of the same team with the same result for all the players taking part.

The creator and his friends have experienced chess picnics with as many as up to 13 people being involved, and another bonus is that (with the constant switch of moves and colours), the game levels the playing field by allowing high-rated and low-rated players to play together! ■

McFarland

"[The] classic McFarland book: a deeply researched, lovingly produced and definitive enquiry into an area of chess with a view to being the last word on the subject"—*British Chess Magazine*

A World of Chess. ***Its Development and Variations through Centuries and Civilizations.*** Jean-Louis Cazaux *and* Rick Knowlton. 2017, $49.95 softcover (17.8 × 25.4 cm), 408pp., 71 illus., 297 diagrams, 9 maps, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-9427-9. Immense, deeply researched: the Persian and Arab game familiar for 500 years; similar games going back 1500 years still played; evolution of strategic board games especially in India, China and Japan; more recent chess variants (board sizes, new pieces, 3-D etc.).

Henri Lebasque. *Child Playing Chess.* oil on canvas, 34.5 × 40 cm. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

W.H.K. Pollock. ***A Chess Biography with 524 Games.*** Olimpiu G. Urcan *and* John S. Hilbert. 2017, $65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 508pp., 68 illustrations, diagrams, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-5868-4. Englishman Pollock (1859–1896) played in many important American events of the 1800s and numerous matches against strong players. "Wonderful...superb"—*Chessbook Reviews;* "A perfect marriage of subject, author and publisher. Open at random and be entertained."—Jonathan Manley, editor, *Kingpin Chess Magazine;* HONORABLE MENTION, BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD—*Chess Journalists of America.*

H.E. Bird. ***A Chess Biography with 1,198 Games.*** Hans Renette. 2016, $75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 608pp., 1,198 games, 376 diagrams, 85 illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7578-0. No 19th century player had a longer career—nor more slashing attack games—than Henry Edward Bird (1829–1908). A detailed account of his personal life and vigorous feats. BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD—*Chess Journalists of America.*

Vera Menchik. ***A Biography of the First Women's World Chess Champion, with 350 Games.*** Robert B. Tanner. 2016, $49.95 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 328pp., 21 photographs, appendices, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-9602-0. The first woman to compete on an equal basis with the top male players. She dominated women's chess for 17 years. Games include notes by her, Capablanca, Alekhine, Fine, others. "Incredible collection of games...a must-have...quality and clarity of material makes it unique"—*Georgia Chess News.*

José Raúl Capablanca. ***A Chess Biography.*** Miguel A. Sánchez. 2015, $55 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 563pp., 195 annotated games, 55 illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7004-4. "Amazing"—*Huffington Post;* "even the most ardent Capa fan will learn something new"—*Chess Life*; "a luxurious work and a true labor of love"—*Chess News*; "first rate...highly recommended"—IM John Donaldson (*JeremySilman.com*).

Samuel Lipschütz. ***A Life in Chess.*** Stephen Davies. 2015, $65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 408pp., 249 games, 42 illustrations, appendices, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-9596-2. "Valuable collectors' item...beautifully printed...history at its best"—*British Chess Magazine*; "a great discovery"—*Huffington Post*; "highly recommended"—IM John Donaldson (*Jeremy Silman.com*).

Joseph Henry Blackburne. ***A Chess Biography.*** Tim Harding. 2015, $75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 592pp., ***1,186 games***, 95 illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7473-8. "Comprehensive...beautiful"—*Huffington Post*; "a great love for detail...a breathtaking and carefully researched masterpiece"—*Chess News;* "definitive...indispensable"—*Chess Life.*

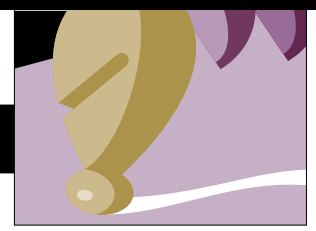
Mikhail Botvinnik. ***The Life and Games of a World Chess Champion.*** Andrew Soltis. 2014, $49.95 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 282pp., 107 annotated games, 127 diagrams, photographs, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7337-3. "Brilliant...the best book on Botvinnik by far"—*Chess News* "another Soltis tour-de-force...fascinating"—IM John Donaldson (*JeremySilman.com)*; BOOK OF THE YEAR—English Chess Federation. BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD—*Chess Journalists of America.*

Ignaz Kolisch. ***The Life and Chess Career.*** Fabrizio Zavatarelli. 2015, $75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 360pp., 324 games, 174 diagrams, 63 illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-9690-7. The Hungarian (1837–1889) champion and financier. "One of the most accurate chess books that McFarland has ever published"—Edward Winter, *Chess Notes*; "remarkable"—*Huffington Post*; FINALIST, BOOK OF THE YEAR—English Chess Federation.

The Classical Era of Modern Chess. Peter J. Monté. 2014, $65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 616pp., 155 illustrations, glossary, appendices, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-6688-7. "Prodigious scholarship...the erudition, the care, and the enormous effort which went into it is obvious"—Dale Brandreth, *Caissa Editions*; "one of the most important chess books published in the last twenty years...highly recommended"—IM John Donaldson (*JeremySilman.com*); "[this] brilliant, exhaustive work is unique in chess history...an absolute must"—*Huffington Post;* HONORABLE MENTION, BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD—*Chess Journalists of America.*

"Very interesting studies...McFarland puts out more scholarly chess books than any other"—*Chess Life*

Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina 28640 USA • www.mcfarlandpub.com



Garry the Neoliberal

I read with much gusto Jonathan Rowson's review of Garry Kasparov's book, 'Deep Thinking?' (New In Chess 2017/5). It's most welcome to see that somebody took on the challenge of engaging critically with the ex-champ's ideology through an examination of the latter's writing on the topic of Artificial Intelligence. I've always found it amusing how Kasparov's political orientation is most of the time given a pass in the main chess outlets, which is interesting given the names of some of the non-chess figures that he admires (e.g. Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Milton Friedman and Barry Goldwater) and the ideology they represent in the context of today's catastrophic reality under capitalism.

Dr. Rowson's review exposes the fragility of any perceived consistency in Garry's outlook of the world, an outlook that still betrays the lasting impact of Cold War propaganda from both sides of the wall on many of our beloved senior grandmasters (Nigel Short would be another example). More importantly, the article asks the questions required to start engaging critically with one of human kind's latest fetishes, artificial intelligence. The ex-champ has been put on check, hopefully he will have a reply.

Dr. Ian J. Seda-Irizarry
Brooklyn, New York, USA

Heath Ledger claim

John Henderson writes that Heath Ledger was an accomplished chess player who won the Western Australian junior championship at age 10 (Celeb 64, New In Chess 2017/5). Are we sure of the claim? The Chess Association of Western Australia (CAWA) lists its junior champions going back to 1963, but has no mention of Ledger. In an interview with *MTV.com* given a few months before his untimely death, Ledger stated only that he played chess since he was a kid and plays every day. An article in *People* notes that he was often seen playing in Washington Square Park, but generally lost more games than he won. Further, while the junior championship claim for Ledger did not originate in New In Chess and may yet turn out to be true, I find it incredulous to think one would walk away from a promising chess career to become a movie star.

Jay Kleinman
Franklin Square, New York, USA

Editorial Postscript

It looks as if the myth of Heath Ledger's chess prowess as a kid was embellished by the media and it was carried forward to the documentary, which definitely played up his chess playing abilities.

Write to us
New In Chess, P.O. Box 1093
1810 KB Alkmaar, The Netherlands
or e-mail: editors@newinchess.com
Letters may be edited or abridged

Provocative

New In Chess 2017/6 contained a letter from Italy as a reaction on a cartoon in issue 2017/4 that apparently did injustice to President Putin. One wonders, what is the purpose of publishing this letter? That Russia under Putin is undermining democracy in the Western world, most visibly shown by the efforts to influence the US Presidential election in 2016, has been proven in a convincing way (except for the President himself apparently). That Russia under Putin has illegally annexed Crimea and keeps fuelling a war in East Ukraine is also beyond any doubt, perhaps except for the misinformed Russian population and some fellow-travellers in the West like Mr. Briffaut. Then why would New In Chess publish such a provocative letter, what purpose does it serve? Just to provoke further political discussion in a chess magazine? I believe it is out of place. There's nothing to add to the illustration, which conveys feelings in the free world about Putin pretty well, including the welcome addition by Kasparov himself.

Ardjan Langedijk
Heemstede, The Netherlands

Sinquefield's Largesse

I enjoyed the New In Chess 2017/6 articles regarding the St. Louis chess scene and the amazing support provided by Rex Sinquefield and his wife Jeanne. I must point out an error, however. The 'Infographic' titled 'Sinquefield's Largesse' states that Gata Kamsky '... has not played in the Sinquefield Cup ...'. In fact, Kamsky was one of the four participants in the first Sinquefield Cup, which featured 'The Top Two in the World' (Magnus Carlsen and Levon Aronian) and 'The Top Two in the U.S.' (Hikaru Nakamura and Gata Kamsky).

Ken Marshall
Lombard, IL, USA

Editorial Postscript

Thank you. Of course, you are right.

COLOPHON

PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
HONORARY EDITOR: Jan Timman
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Anish Giri
EDITORS: Peter Boel, René Olthof
ART-DIRECTION: Jan Scholtus
PRODUCTION: Joop de Groot
TRANSLATORS: Ken Neat, Piet Verhagen
SALES AND ADVERTISING: Remmelt Otten

PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS ISSUE:
Alina l'Ami, Maria Emelianova, Raymond Fudge, Anastasia Karlovich, Eteri Kublashvili, Berend Vonk
COVER PHOTO: Alisa Studios Los Angeles

© No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

NEW IN CHESS
P.O. BOX 1093
1810 KB ALKMAAR
THE NETHERLANDS

PHONE: 00-31-(0)72-51 27 137
SUBSCRIPTIONS: nic@newinchess.com
EDITORS: editors@newinchess.com
ADVERTISING: otten@newinchess.com

WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM

INFOGRAPHIC

Many Top Players Underperformed in the World Cup

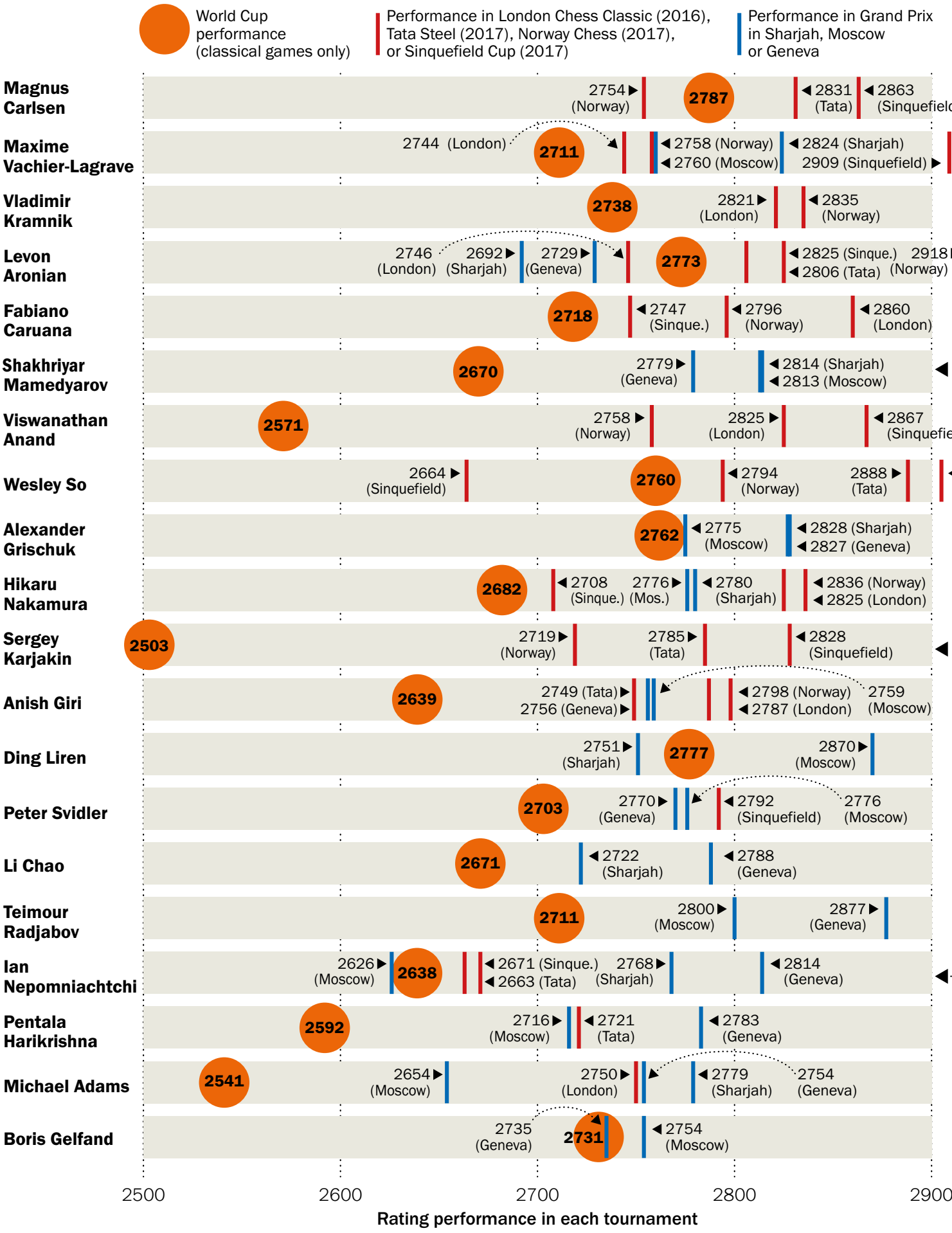
A criticism sometimes levelled about the world's elite players is that they are too insolated -- they usually compete against each other in closed tournaments, which helps protect their ratings because they risk fewer points when they lose and gain more points when they win. If the recent World Cup in Tbilisi is indicative, there may be some validity to that criticism.

During the tournament, the top players faced many competitors who were not in the top 20 or so in the world and, as the graphic below shows, in many cases, their results were below those of their performances in recent closed elite tournaments.

(To be sure, part of the difference in performance is no doubt because of the high-stakes pressure of elimination in the World Cup, which encourages players to be more cautious.)

The graphic includes most of the players who appeared in the World Cup and one of the four elite tournaments in the last 12 months and/or the Grand Prix.

DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN



Mamedyarov's strong showing in the Grand Prix, in which he is the points leader, makes it likely that he will earn a place in the Candidates tournament.

Karjakin already has a spot in the Candidates tournament, which may have contributed to a lack of motivation and his lackluster showing.

Nepomniachtchi has struggled with his consistency throughout the last 12 months.

Fair & Square

Jimmy Carter: 'I found that I didn't have any particular talent for chess. I hate to admit it, but that's a fact.' *(The 39th President of the United States, 1977-1981, who originally had hopes on becoming an active chess player after leaving the White House, but gave up in frustration)*

John Quincy Adams: 'It is with poetry as with chess and billiards – There is a certain degree of attainment, which labour and practice will reach, and beyond which no vigils and no vows will go.' *(The 6th President of the United States, 1825-1829)*

Hou Yifan: 'Some people's chess styles match their personality perfectly. For me, it's the opposite: In chess I'm aggressive, but not in real life.' *(In a major September profile on ESPN.com of the world's top female player)*

Ray Charles: 'I love chess. You can wake me up at night and say, "Hey, let's play some chess" and I get up and do it.'

Eliot Spitzer: 'I'm surprised so many on Wall Street like chess. It has rules.' *(The former governor of New York, in a major Bloomberg Business feature on Lev Alburt teaching chess to many leading Wall Street figures for over two decades)*

Nicola Adams: 'It feels now more than ever like a game of chess. I like playing chess and it's all about making your opponent make moves that they don't realise they're making and falling into the trap and going for the finish.' *(Great Britain's two-times Olympic boxing gold medalist – and now world title aspirant – who has played chess since childhood, interviewed in The Times ahead of her debut professional bout in Las Vegas)*

Wolfgang Heidenfeld: 'Chess is a fight, not a science, and men are men and not machines.' *(From the multi-time Irish and South African champion's acclaimed 1947 book, "Busts!")*

Treasure I. Moore: 'No one has ever won a game of chess by making only forward moves. Sometimes you have to move backwards to take better steps forward.' *(In the author's self-help book, The Long and Short of It: A Journey of Self Discovery and Reflection)*

Milton Jones: 'I got arrested playing chess in the street. I said, it's because I'm black, isn't it?' *(The Welsh surreal stand-up comedian)*

Viktors Pupols: 'Chess rewards merit; it is more fair than life. National origin, age, sex, social status don't matter. Good ideas are rewarded; bad ones punished. There are no hole cards or luck; all assets are even and in plain view. Apples and oranges act in harmony; this skill is transferable to other life pursuits.' *(The Latvian-born veteran American master, who beat Bobby Fischer in the 1955 US Junior Championship with his pet-opening of the Latvian Gambit)*

Groucho Marx: 'Learn from the mistakes of others. You can never live long enough to make them all yourself.'

Graham Turner: 'In 1999 we went completely digital. The cameras were real beasts, poor quality and horrible to use. It was like playing chess – not thinking about what's happening, but what's going to happen, they were so slow.' *(The Guardian top photographer talking about the difficult shift from film to digital cameras)*

Nelson Mandela: 'I never lose. I either win or learn.'

Scott D. Weitzenhoffer: 'Debating creationists on the topic of evolution is rather like trying to play chess with a pigeon; it knocks the pieces over, craps on the board, and flies back to its flock to claim victory.' *(In his review of Eugenie Scotts' 2005 book, Evolution vs. Creationism: An introduction)*

Garry Kasparov: 'You cannot say, "Go! Go! Rah! Rah! Good move!" People want some emotion. Chess is an art and not a spectator sport.'

World Cup winner and runner-up Ding Liren qualify for Candidates tournament

Aronian tops everyone in Tbilisi

In a gruelling knock-out battle with all the best players in the world taking part and lasting 26 days, luck inevitably played a role, but Levon Aronian only needed very little of it to clinch a badly wanted win. At the World Cup in Georgia's capital, physical fitness, mental resilience and a close-knit team were the pillars of the Armenian's fully deserved success. Not for the first time this year he out-performed World Champion Magnus Carlsen, and his fans have reason to believe that he is closer to his biggest dream than ever. **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** reports from Tbilisi.

As the first game of the final of the 2017 World Cup is about to begin, a digital countdown clock shows that the moment has been well timed: in exactly one year from now, the 43rd Chess Olympiad will start in Batumi, Georgia's second largest city on the coast of the Black Sea. The Olympiad and the World Cup are inseparably bound together these days. If you want to host the Olympiad, you also have to bid for the preceding World Cup.

Now that the number of players has been reduced to two, the event has been moved from the Hualing Hotel outside Tbilisi to the posh Biltmore Hotel on Rustaveli Avenue in the

ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

Tariel Khechikashvili, Georgia's Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, hands Levon Aronian the $120,000 winner's cheque, as ECU President Zurab Azmaiparashvili approaches with the specially designed trophy.

very heart of the city. The building has a rich and chequered history. It was constructed as the Institute of Marxism and Leninism in the 1930s. In the early 90s, the splendid Guild Amphitheatre, where the World Cup final is played, was the place where the Georgian Parliament held their sessions and where, in 1995, the first constitution of Georgia was adopted. And now this semi-circular hall is part of a luxury hotel that is topped by a blue glass skyscraper that makes it one of the most striking landmarks of modern Tbilisi.

The chess table that is used for the final also has a history to tell, as it was used in one of Nona Gaprindashvili's world championship matches. Nona held the title from 1962 to 1978. The 40-year-old table looks like a modest version of the one Fischer and Spassky played on in Reykjavik in 1972. That one also had soft cushions to rest your arms on and a compartment where the players can put their small belongings, as the arbiter hastily points out to Ding Liren when he walks up to the board with his accreditation card and a banana in his hand. The Chinese number one arrives almost shyly, dressed in jeans, sneakers and a jacket, while Levon Aronian makes a more decisive entrance wearing a sharp suit and black and white gangster shoes.

The first move is made by Tariel Khechikashvili, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, watched by ECU President Zurab Azmaiparashvili and the President of the Georgian Chess Federation, Giorgi Giorgadze. And Nona Gaprindashvili, of course, the living legend, who at 76 is still as passionate about chess as ever, as everyone can attest who follows her loud, rapid-fire comments in the VIP-room during the games.

Besides for its wines – both excellent whites and reds – Georgia is famous for the exceptional successes of their women chess players. Gaprindashvili finally lost the title to her compatriot Maya Chiburdanidze, who prolonged the Georgian hegemony till 1991. In that year, Xie Jun heralded the current predomi-

nance of the Chinese women. Just like Gaprindashvili, Chiburdanidze regularly visited the World Cup, as did world championship finalists Nana Alexandria and Nana Ioseliani.

The current generation of Georgian women players was represented by WGM Keti Tsatsalashvili, who acted as commentator in the live broadcast. During the first five rounds, she did so at the side of Ivan Sokolov, a known wine-lover, who according to the organizers didn't hide his fondness of the Georgian reds. Whether there was any connection we will probably read in the sequel to his autobiographical book *Chess Journey: Games and Stories*, but one day Sokolov entered the studio with a cut on his forehead. Before the viewers could ask any questions, he started the broadcast with a deadpan 'That's what you get when you go out with Jobava'.

And hopefully Sokolov will also include an instant classic from the early rounds, a most remarkable show of sangfroid. Waking up in the middle of the night, he went to the bathroom, closed the door behind him and then discovered that he had not closed the door to the bathroom, but was standing outside his room in the corridor. Naked. Seeing no other solution, he took the elevator down to the reception and asked for a new key.

The serene quiet of the Guild Amphitheatre during the final is in stark contrast to the hubbub of the first round with 128 players in the vast ballroom of the Hualing Hotel. At a 30-minute drive from the centre of Tbilisi, the Hualing Hotel was literally situated in the middle of nowhere, which was not to everyone's liking, but said nothing about the quality of the hotel, a five-star member of a Chinese chain with excellent, fully equipped rooms and, next door, a state-of-the-art fitness centre with a big pool. Some players, for example Wesley So, preferred to stay in the centre of Tbilisi regardless, even though this meant long car rides to and from the venue, but most of them stayed at the Hualing. Some grumbled about the 187 dollars they had to pay per night, including full board, but given the 1.6 million dollar prize-fund, these complaints were pretty questionable. As Zurab Azmaiparashvili pointed out, this is considerably more than the prize-money in the last World Championship match in New York, an event that is far easier to market. In fact, with this prize-money, the World Cup would most probably never have been held at all, but for the fact that it was part of Georgia's bid for the Olympiad, with a total price tag of some 12 million dollars. As he argued, the size of the prize-money is a left-over from the days when the knock-out 'World Cup' was the World Championship, and no longer makes sense today, when it is only a qualifier in the world championship cycle.

ETERI KUBLASHVILI

Anton Kovalyov in the second round of the World Cup, when no one seemed to be interested in his shorts yet.

'As Azmaiparashvili pointed out, 1.6 million is considerably more than the prize-money in the last World Championship match.'

To some extent, Azmaiparashvili's thoughts about the prize-fund may have played a part in the one story from the World Cup that made the news worldwide: the incident in which he took Canadian GM Anton Kovalyov to task for wearing shorts in the playing room and thus violating the dress code. It didn't help either that Azmaiparashvili was a bit on edge already when this happened, because shortly before he ran into Kovalyov, he had had to convince an arbiter who was to leave later that day, that he should take his suitcase to the storage room of the hotel and not bring it into the playing room.

Needless to say, Azmaiparashvili should never have lost his temper when addressing Kovalyov, and should not have told him *before the game* that he would see to it that the Canadian would get the highest fine under the FIDE rules for violating the dress code. But amid all the indig-

nation that followed there was very little understanding for an organizer who tries to stage an international event in a 5-star hotel and sees a participant who in his eyes is dressed too casually. Nor was there much interest in his repeated apologies for his behaviour. Instead, much was made of Kovalyov's account on his Facebook page, where he wrote that he had been called a 'gipsy', which he saw as a racist slur – a debatable conclusion, since Kovalyov is not a gipsy, but it had its desired effect and soon headlines started to appear to the effect of 'Chess world embroiled in race row'.

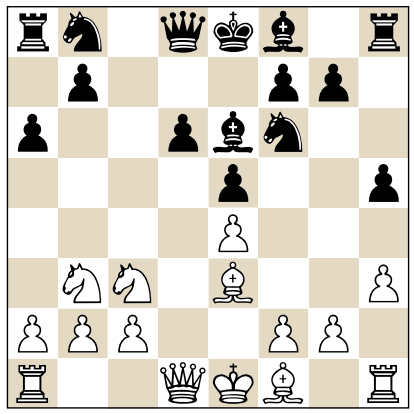
Of course, Kovalyov had a point when he said that no one had minded his shorts – the only pants he had with him – so far and that he had also worn them at the previous World Cup in Baku (which might also have convinced him that in air-conditioned hotels it's not necessary to resort to beach wear if it's hot outside). And those who argued that the FIDE dress code is quite vague were right, too. And so, in the end, the official complaint from the Canadian Chess Federation led the FIDE Ethics Commission to conclude that the incident had revealed considerable grey areas in the dress code that had to be addressed. Otherwise, no action was taken, because the Canadians' complaint did not include any testimony by Kovalyov himself, who after his Facebook story chose to remain silent.

But it remained tragic and confusing that without giving the matter much further thought, Kovalyov had immediately packed his bag and left Tbilisi, leaving everyone who had started to take a special interest in his performance disappointed, and his next opponent with a free ride to the next round. After all, Kovalyov had caused the biggest upset of the second round when he knocked out one of the top favourites by winning the following game.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Vishy Anand
Anton Kovalyov
Tbilisi 2017 (2.1)
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

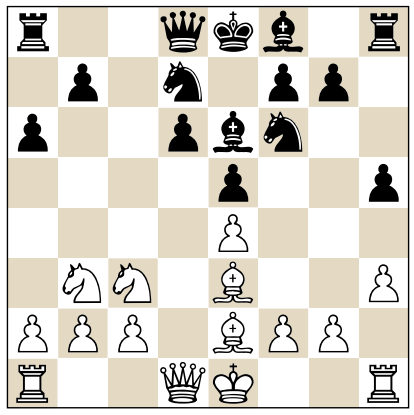
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e6 8.♗e3 h5?!



This move is typical in the Najdorf, when White has a pawn on f3 and the knight on b3, stopping his pretty much only plan of g2-g4, or when White's pawn is on h3 and the knight is on e2, hindering the g4/♘e2-g3 set-up and the natural development of the f1-bishop.

With the knight on b3 and the pawn on h3, this move is poor. It is easy for White to prepare f4 in one go (which is more often than not his main plan in this variation anyway), and the pawn on h5 is a minor weakening of Black's kingside pawn structure.

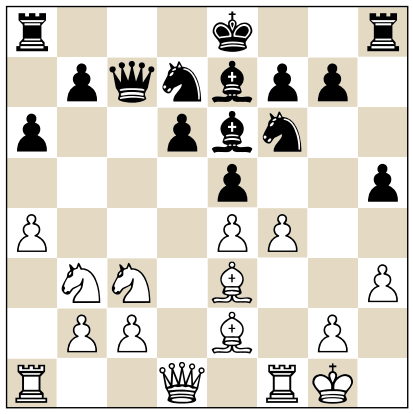
9.♗e2 ♘bd7



Black's set-up looks 'normal', but since it is not the 6.f3 variation but the 6.h3 variation and White gets f2-f4 in one go, Black is essentially a tempo down. You may get away with a tempo down in a Giuoco Piano, but not in a sharp Sicilian.

10.0-0?! Vishy plays a little timidly, but he will get another chance to punish Black for not obeying the laws of the Najdorf later on.

10.f4! at once would have been stronger. Black has to deal with the threat of f4-f5, but neither allowing or stopping it will solve his issues: 10...♕c7!? (maybe the best attempt to keep things together – 10...g6 11.♕d2 ♖c8 12.0-0-0 or 10...♖c8 11.f5 ♗c4 12.♗xc4 ♖xc4 13.♕d3 ♖c8 14.0-0-0 doesn't look good for Black. He lacks a couple of tempi for his position to be decent) 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.a4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and one doesn't need to be Efim Petrovich Geller to see that things are not going well for Black here. To begin with, he can't castle kingside so easily, since the h5-pawn is vulnerable.

10...♖c8 11.♕d2

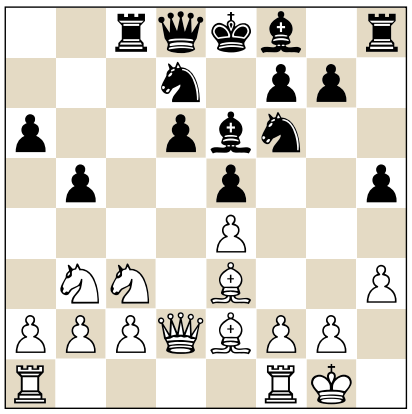
Again, too timid. 11.f4!? was still strong. Vishy was satisfied to get a good version of the Karpov Variation in the 6.♗e2 Najdorf, but the nature of that line is such that, bad version or good, the position is still perfectly playable for Black. White's plans there are slow and manoeuvring.

11...b5?

Another 'normal-looking' move that is completely out of context. Black has wasted time on ...h5 and not only is he not happy to get away with it and castle asap, he is asking for a spanking on the queenside.

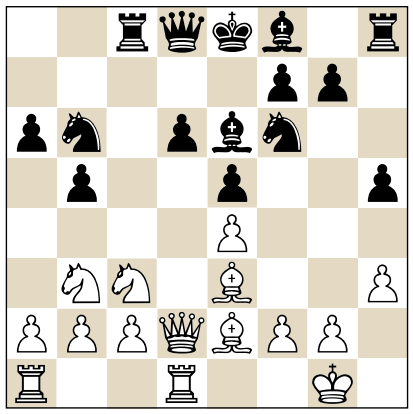
After 11...♗e7 12.a4 0-0 13.a5 ♖e8

14.♖fd1 g6, White can be happy and decide whether to reroute the b3-knight to b4 or wait a little bit. But either way, it's too early to get over-excited.



12.♖fd1?! It must be incredibly hard to spot 14.♕d1! in the following line, but that Black deserves to be punished for his poor opening play should be a no-brainer for a player of Vishy's class. After 12.a4! b4 13.♘d5 ♘xe4 14.♕d1! Black's position collapses. Maybe the best attempt is to muddy the waters with 14...♘ef6 (14...♗xd5 15.♕xd5 ♘ef6 runs into 16.♕b7) 15.♘xf6+ gxf6 16.♗xa6 ♖c7 17.♗b5. Here Black has some minor hopes, thanks to the half-open g-file, but essentially Black is on the verge of losing. White will just go ♔h1 and f2-f3 if need be, while the a-pawn is going to run down the board in no time.

12...♘b6!?

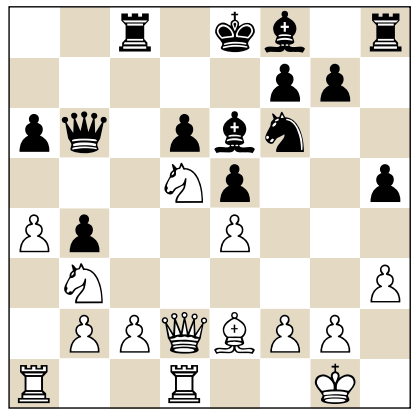


A bad plan is better than no plan, so Black sticks to his dubious strategy.

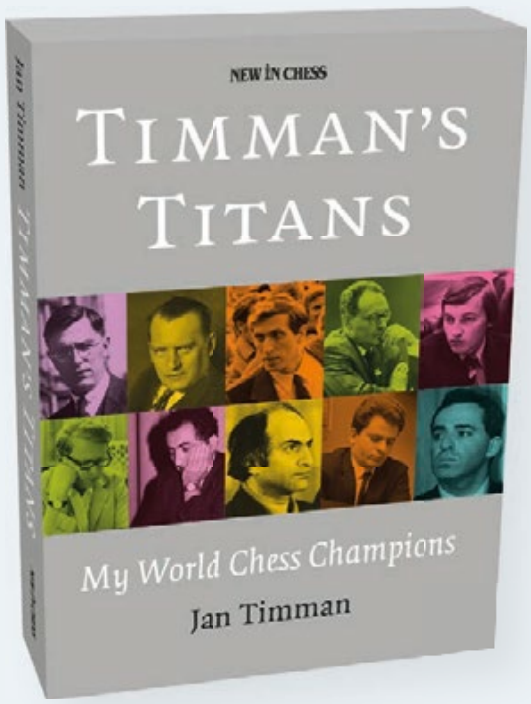
By now it's too late to try and finish his development: 12...♗e7 13.a4! b4 14.♘d5 ♘xe4 15.♕xb4 is what Vishy must have been planning when he played 12.♖fd1.

13.♗xb6!? Strangely enough, it is not easy for White to use his enormous lead in development here. Vishy finds a strong idea: to give a beautiful bishop for the initiative. Instead, 13.a4 ♘c4! 14.♗xc4 bxc4 would keep the position closed and the Black player happy.

13...♕xb6 14.a4 b4 15.♘d5



English Chess Federation 2017 Book of the Year!



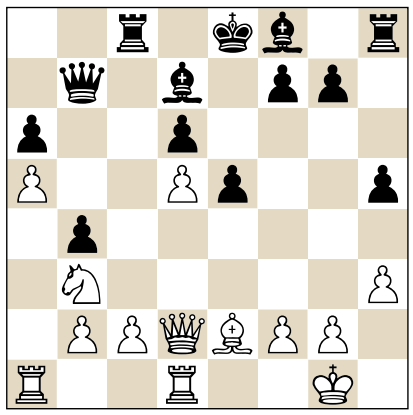
"The judges unanimously agreed on a chess book which covers nearly every aspect of chess: history, character, ambition, styles of play, technical aspects, a rare chess set, wives and even dreams!"

"What lifts this book is Timman's affectionate, intimate descriptions of the personalities of the world champions. The book must be read to obtain the full flavour of Timman's writing. It is by no means all reverential..."

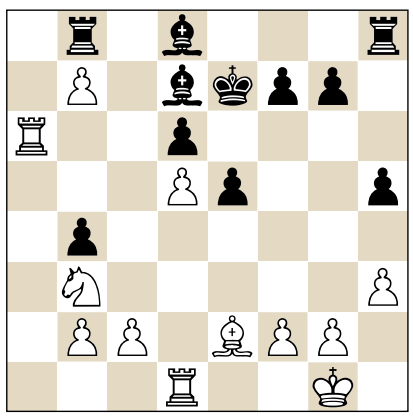
"In summary, *Timman's Titans* is the most informative, interesting and revealing book on the world champions covered, both as people and chess players."

paperback | 320 pages | €26.95 | available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com | a NEW IN CHESS publication

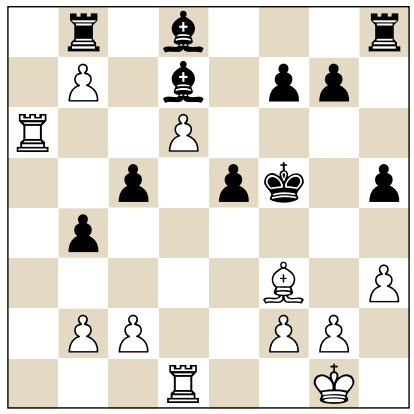
15...♘xd5! The right capture.
15...♗xd5? 16.exd5 ♘e4 17.♕e1 ♖xc2 won't work, the main reason being 18.♘d4! ♖xb2 19.a5 ♕a7, when 20.♘c6! ♕c5 21.♗xa6 ♘xf2 22.♖d4!!, threatening 23.♖c1, is a study-like win, but the immediate 18.♖d4!? looks good, too.
16.exd5 ♗d7 17.a5 ♕b7



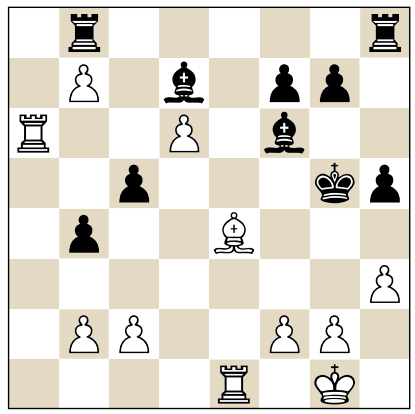
18.♕e3 A creative way of getting to the a6-pawn.
18.♘c1! was another way to start harassing Black's queenside, a very effective one!: 18...g6 19.♘a2 ♖b8 20.c3 bxc3 21.bxc3 ♗h6 22.♕d3, and Black is too late to protect his a6-pawn, so White is on track to win this game.
18...♗e7 19.♕b6 ♕xb6 20.axb6 ♖b8! 21.♖xa6 ♗d8! 22.b7 ♔e7
22...♖xb7 was actually possible, but would have changed the course of this game, and with it the course of history, since White would no longer be able to commit the same blunder as in the game: 23.♖da1! (23.♖xd6 ♗b6 24.♘d2 ♔e7 25.♘c4 ♗d4 gives Black enough counterplay).



23.♘c5?? It is hard to say what Vishy had missed; perhaps the fact that Black can connect the rooks by moving the bishop from d8 along the d8-h4 diagonal.
Perhaps the best way to develop the queenside initiative is to get the second rook over to the a-file: 23.♖a8 ♖xb7 24.♖da1!, threatening ♖a7, and sometimes ♘a5 as well. Black is very likely going to have to face a hard choice, regardless of whether he wants to give up the b4-pawn or try to hang on to it, and give up the h5-pawn first.
23...dxc5 24.d6+ ♔f6 24...♔e6 25.♗c4+ ♔f5 26.♗d5 boils down to the same. **25.♗f3 ♔f5!**

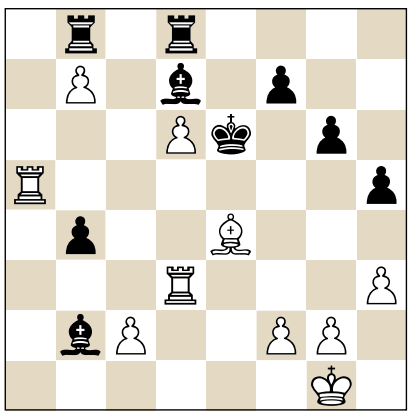


And now 26.♖a8 can be met by the d8-bishop going to one of the squares on the d8-h4 diagonal. I suspect this is what had escaped Anand's attention. In the rest of the game he could have put up better resistance, but it was hard. Not only must he have felt demoralized about his blunder, but the variations that would have to be calculated are pretty difficult, too.
26.♗d5 e4 27.♖e1 ♗f6 27...♖e8!? might objectively be a better move. After 28.♗xf7 ♖xb7 29.♗xe8 ♗xe8 Black has good chances to convert his bishop pair vs rook edge.
28.♗xe4+ ♔g5

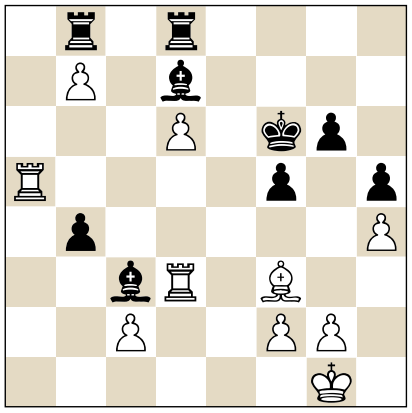


29.♖a5 29.h4+! offered White good saving chances: 29...♔h6 30.♖ea1 ♗xb2 31.♖1a5 (now 32.♖a8 is a serious threat) 31...f6! 32.♖xc5 (32.♖a8 ♗e5!) 32...♖he8 33.♗f3 ♖e1+ 34.♔h2 ♗e5+ 35.g3 ♖f1. This resource is important, but I am not sure it is enough for Black to win.

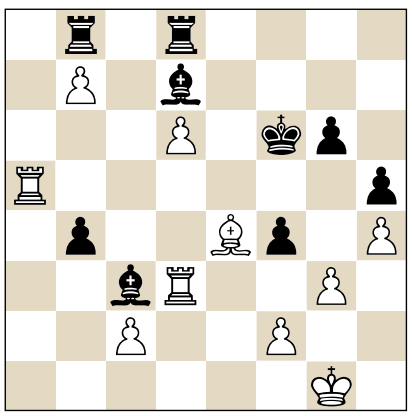
29...♗xb2 30.♖xc5+ ♔f6 31.♖e3 g6 32.♖f3+ ♔e6 33.♖d3 ♖hd8 34.♖a5?! 34.f4 f5 35.♗f3 h4 36.g4 hxg3 37.♔g2 could potentially create more counterplay and more problems for Black.



34...f5?! 34...♔f6!, with the idea of ...♗f5, would win.
35.♗f3 ♗c3 36.h4 ♔f6?! 36...f4! would have been a better move order: 37.♖a8 can now be met with 37...♗b5! 38.♖d1 ♔d7!, preparing ♗c6.



37.g3? 37.♖a8! f4 38.♖d1 was the last attempt to create technical difficulties. White has anticipated the ...♗f5 idea, which can now be met by 39.d7.
37...f4! Now, with the bishop coming to f5, White is completely lost.
38.♗e4



38...♗f5! Without the light-squared bishop the b7-pawn falls and with it the whole position collapses.
39.♗xf5 gxf5 40.♖b5 ♔e6 41.♔f1 41.gxf4 would be a little more decent-looking, but after 41...♖d7 42.♖e3+ ♔xd6 43.♖xf5 ♖bxb7 44.♖xh5 ♖h7 the fact that White has three pawns for the piece is sadly ironic. He is dead lost. The pawns are not going anywhere, while the situation on the queenside is sad.
41...♖d7 42.gxf4 ♖bxb7 43.♖e3+ ♔f6 White resigned.

■ ■ ■

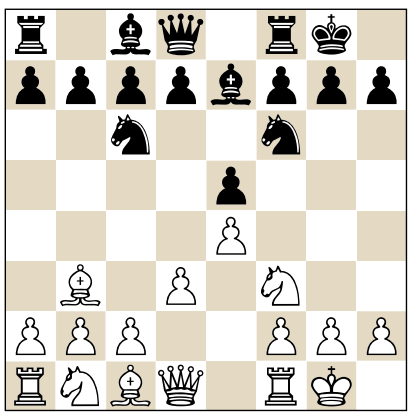
Anand's early elimination came as a shock, but soon fans worldwide would be reeling from an even bigger sensation. Much to everyone's delight and surprise, Magnus Carlsen had decided to take part in the World Cup. It didn't sound logical for the World Champion to play in a tournament that is part of a cycle that is meant to find his next Challenger, but he had found nothing in the rules that excluded him from participating. And he was in the mood to play and there was nothing wrong with the prize-money, so why not? For the organizers, his wish to come to Tbilisi was a gift that significantly boosted the prestige of the World Cup, since it meant that suddenly the entire elite was on board. Their only brief worry was how he would affect the two qualification tickets for the Candidates tournament if he reached the final.

And Carlsen took the challenge seriously. Not only did he bring his father Henrik and second Peter Heine Nielsen, but also the cook who had served him so well during the past world title matches. In the first round, he warmed up against Oluwafemi Balogun, rated 2252, from Nigeria, and the ease with which he disposed of Alexey Dreev in Round 2 seemed to indicate great form. But one moment can cost you dearly in the knock-out format, and a moment of over-optimism against former Chinese prodigy Bu Xiangzhi put an abrupt end to Carlsen's Georgian adventure.

NOTES BY
Bu Xiangzhi

Magnus Carlsen
Bu Xiangzhi
Tbilisi 2017 (3.1)
Two Knight's Defence

Having knocked out Etienne Bacrot in the tie-break of Round 2, an encounter with the reigning World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, was awaiting me. I'd lost to him three times in the past and my only win was in a blindfold game in Bilbao 10 years ago. So I just lowered my expectations and prepared to learn from him. I didn't do much preparation, just kept telling myself to play as I always do.
1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 Carlsen's choice of the Bishop's Opening came as a surprise. I guess his main motive was avoiding the Petroff Defence.
2...♘f6 3.d3 ♘c6
I had played 3...c6 in some games, but that is a much more complicated line (after 4.♘f3 d5 5.♗b3) and one has to memorize lots of variations. I was a bit concerned that I might not remember them, so I chose this simpler and safer move.
4.♘f3 ♗e7 Likewise, I did not play 4...♗c5, transferring to the Italian Opening, because I know that my opponent plays this as Black. My aim was to avoid his preparation. The opening is not my specialty, but I'm quite confident about my middle-game calculations.
5.0-0 0-0 6.♗b3 Carlsen paused a bit here. He probably thought that if he played 6.c3, I would go 6...d5 and get some counterplay in the centre.



MARIA EMELIANOVA

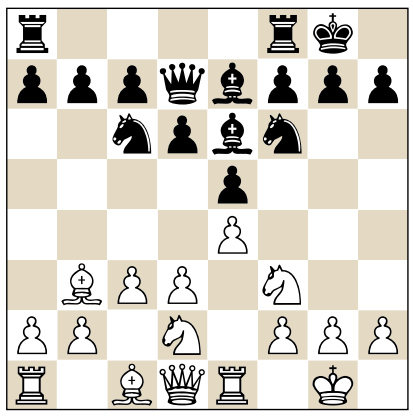
Blissfully unaware of his encounter with Bu Xiangzhi a few days later, a smiling Magnus Carlsen watches the Chinese former prodigy dispose of Argentinian GM Diego Flores (2-0) in Round 1.

6...d6 This move cost me plenty of time. I was hesitating and trying to decide whether to react in the centre or play a solid game. Actually, 6...d5 would have been fine, but I did not see 9...a5 in what could follow, so I played the text-move: 6...d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♖e1 ♗f6 9.♘bd2 (9.h3 a5) 9...a5 10.♘e4 a4 11.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 12.♗c4 ♗g4, and Black is OK.

7.c3 ♗e6 8.♖e1 This is a reasonable move. If White tries to avoid exchanging the bishop by retreating to c2, I would immediately react with ...d5 and have counterplay.

8...♕d7 9.♘bd2

White would probably do better to keep the light-squared bishop with 9.♗c2!? or 9.♗a4!?, but my opponent must have thought that if I didn't trade the bishops on the previous move, I wouldn't do it here either.

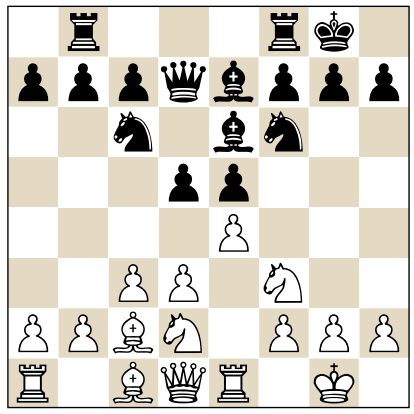


9...♖ab8!? This move cost me 20 minutes. I wanted to trade the bishops but didn't want to allow d4. I decided to protect b7 first, which in some circumstances also prevents ♗a4. However, it was better to trade now (but again I failed to see the strength of the advance ...a7-a5-a4): 9...♗xb3 10.♕xb3 a5 (10...♖ab8 is met by 11.d4) 11.a4 (on 11.d4 I have 11...a4 12.♕d1 exd4 13.cxd4 ♖fe8) 11...d5 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♘f4 15.g3 ♘xd3 16.♖d5 ♘xc1 17.♖xd7 ♘xb3 18.♘xb3 ♗d6 19.♘d2 f6 20.♘c4 ♖f7 21.♖xf7 ♔xf7, and White is only marginally better.

10.♗c2 Carlsen made this move without thinking, spoiling my plan. If he had pushed the d-pawn, Black would have got a pretty good position. For example: 10.d4 exd4 11.cxd4 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5 13.♖e2 ♖fe8 14.d5 ♘b4 15.a3 ♘d3 16.♖e3 ♘xc1 17.♖xc1 ♕d8.

10...d5

If I do not push ...d5 now, after 11.d4, my position would be very passive.

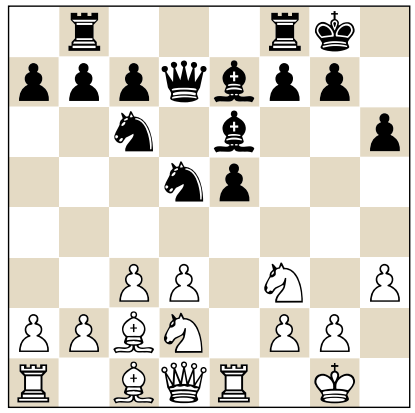


11.h3 White should have accepted the challenge and opened the centre to attack the e5-pawn. Due to my lack of development, he would get an advantage after 11.exd5 ♕xd5 12.h3 ♖bd8 13.♕e2.

11...h6 Since he did not capture, I continued to play the necessary moves. Trading the central pawns would just benefit White.

12.exd5 This took Carlsen only one minute. Maybe he thought that the insertion of h3 and ...h6 was even better for him.

12...♘xd5 I spent 20 minutes calculating three captures and eventually decided to take with the knight. Since the e5-pawn was going to drop anyway, I preferred to let it go and have a nice fight.



13.♘xe5

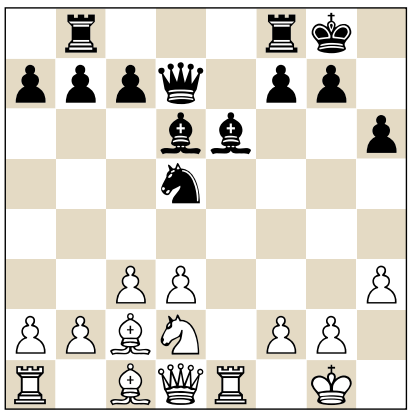
My opponent spent 15 minutes on this pawn capture. He was probably considering alternatives, but as it turns out, if he didn't capture now, he would never get the pawn.

13...♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♗d6 15.♖e1

This Carlsen played rather quickly. He actually had an alternative that would not allow the sacrifice on h3. I guess he was just too confident about his play. After 15.♖e4 ♗f5 16.♘c4 the rook is protected indirectly by the pin on the d-file (16...♗xe4? 17.dxe4 ♘f6 18.e5).

At this point, White had 50 minutes left on the clock, while I still had 35.

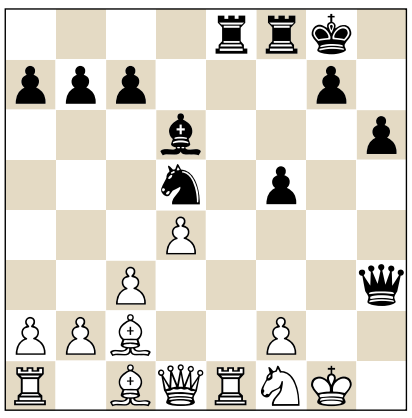
I didn't have much to consider in this position. I was already a pawn down, so it was a 'do or die' situation.



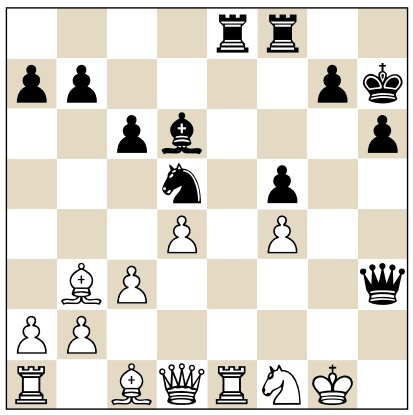
15...♗xh3! 16.gxh3 ♕xh3 17.♘f1 While Carlsen was thinking about this move, I was wondering whether he would decide to repeat moves with 17.♕f3 ♗h2+ 18.♔h1 ♗g3+ 19.♔g1 ♗h2+ and go for the draw. Ten minutes later I got the answer. My opponent's fighting spirit is something that deserves my respect and is also something for me to learn from.

17...♖be8 18.d4 I was mainly concerned about 18.♗d2, which would the a1-rook join the fight. After the game I found that ...g5 and ...♘f4 would have given me sufficient play to hold the position together.

18...f5 This move probably came as a surprise for my opponent. It popped up in my mind 'in a flash'. It's a multi-purpose move that does not allow ♗e4, blocks the c2-h7 diagonal and prepares Black's ...♖f8-f6-g6 manoeuvre.



19.♗b3 c6 20.f4 ♔h7 My mind was preoccupied by attacking ideas and this left no room to spot the following secure line: 20...g5 21.♖e2 ♔g7 22.♖h2 ♕g4+ 23.♕xg4 fxg4 24.♗d1 ♘xf4 25.♗xf4 ♗xf4, with sufficient compensation for Black.

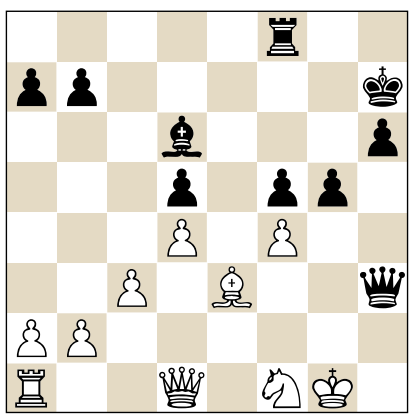


21.♗xd5? Time-pressure took its toll on him. Now the clocks showed that White had 18 minutes and Black 26. Trading his bishop for my knight was an absolute mistake. With the bishop still on, he would have kept his queen protected and after the following variation White would successfully trade the queens and reach a promising position with extra material: 21.♖e2 ♘xf4 22.♖h2 ♕g4+ 23.♕xg4 fxg4 24.♗xf4 ♖xf4.

21...cxd5 22.♖e3 White would also be in a difficult situation after 22.♖e2 ♕g4+ 23.♔f2 g5 24.fxg5 (24.♘h2 ♕h4+ 25.♔f1 gxf4) 24...♖e4, and Black's attack is hard to deal with.

22...♖xe3 23.♗xe3
23.♘xe3? loses to 23...♗xf4 24.♘f1 ♗d6, and there is no defence against Black's attack.

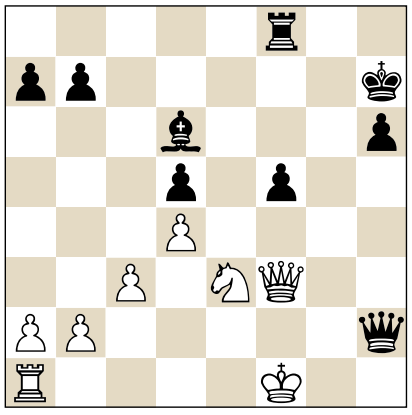
23...g5! There's a fair chance that Carlsen had overlooked this move. The main idea is to open up the g-file, and, by attacking the e3-bishop, to disturb White's coordination. For the first time in the game I felt that I was winning.



24.♔f2 My opponent had two minutes left and still needed to make 17 moves. He decided to try to move his king out of danger, but the following line would not have saved White either: 24.fxg5 f4 25.♕c2+ ♖f5 26.♗xf4 ♗xf4 27.♖e1 ♔g7 28.♖e2 ♖xg5+ 29.♖g2 ♕xg2+ 30.♕xg2 ♔g6, and Black wins. After 24.♕a4 Black plays 24...♖f7.

24...gxf4 25.♕f3 Under pressure, my opponent decided to return the extra piece to slow down my attack. If he tries to retain the dark-squared bishop, White's king will be checkmated in a few moves: 25.♗d2 ♕h4+ 26.♔e2 f3+ 27.♔xf3 ♖g8. And 25.♗xf4 ♗xf4 26.♕f3 loses to 26...♕h4+ 27.♔e2 ♖e8+ 28.♔d3 ♕g4.

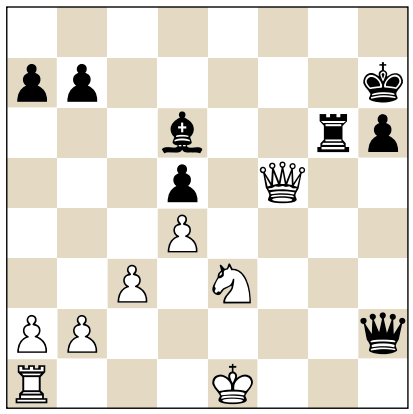
25...fxe3+ 26.♘xe3 ♕h2+ 27.♔f1 27.♘g2 cannot save the game either: 27...♖g8 28.♖g1 ♔h8 29.♔f1 f4, with the deadly threat of 30...♖g3. And 27.♕g2 loses quickly to 27...♕h4+.



27...♖g8 I made this move rather quickly, focusing on the idea of supporting the queen to start a decisive attack. I wasn't sure about taking on b2, but this was a good alternative: 27...♕xb2 28.♖e1 ♕xc3 29.♕xd5 ♗g3 30.♖e2. White keeps his king safe, but Black's extra two pawns should guarantee the victory.

28.♕xf5+ ♖g6 I spent more than 10 minutes on this move. This is stronger than 28...♔g7 29.♕f2 ♖f8 30.♘f5+ ♔g6 31.♕xh2 ♗xh2.

29.♔e1 Continuing to check with 29.♕f7+ makes no sense. Neither does 29.♖e1 ♔g7 30.♕d7+ ♔h8 31.♕d8+ ♔h7 32.♕d7+ ♖g7 33.♕f5+ ♔h8. And nor does 29.♘xd5 h5 30.♘f6+ ♔g7 31.♘xh5+ ♔h6.

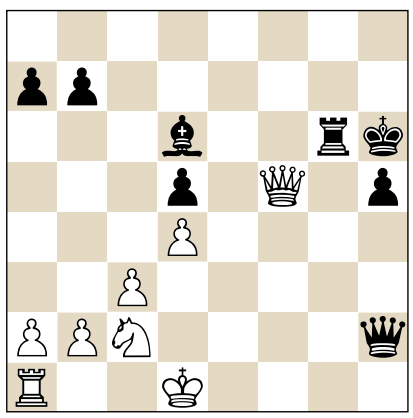


29...h5? Giving White some chances to survive. I should have moved the king to get out of the pin: 29...♔g7 30.♕d7+ ♔h8 31.♕d8+ ♔h7 32.♕d7+ ♖g7 33.♕f5+ ♔h8 34.♕f6 ♗e7, and Black should win.

30.♔d1? Luckily Carlsen didn't consider developing the white rook to help in the defence either. Both of us thought that 30.♖d1, blocking the white king's path, was an unreasonable move, but this was in fact the only way to security: 30.♖d1 ♔h6 (or 30...♗g3+ 31.♔f1 ♔g7 32.♕d7+ ♔h6 33.♕f7 ♗d6 34.♕f2) 31.♖d2 ♖g1+ 32.♘f1 ♕f4 33.♕e6+ ♔g7, and White will draw.

30...♔h6 31.♘c2

The white rook did not have a second chance to come out to help: 31.♖c1 ♖g1+ 32.♘f1 ♕f4 33.♕e6+ ♖g6 34.♕e3 h4, when Black's h-pawn starts approaching its destination.



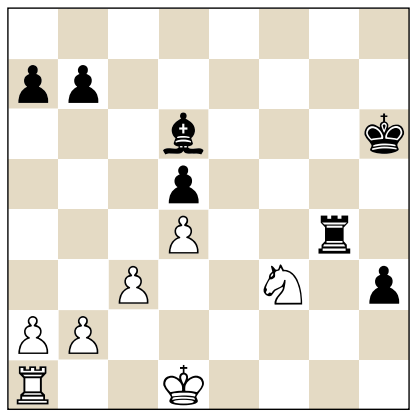
31...h4

My plan was to advance the h-pawn to the first rank as quickly as possible. Under some circumstances trading queens would serve this purpose. Even though sharp lines like 31...♗f4 32.♕f8+ ♔g5 33.♕e7+ ♔f5 34.♕f7+ ♖f6 35.♕h7+ ♔g4 36.♕d3 ♖e6 would initiate a decisive attack on the white king, I preferred solid play and a gradual victory.

32.♘e1 h3 33.♘f3 ♕g2 34.♘e1

Black wins easily after 34.♘h4 ♕g4+ 35.♕xg4 ♖xg4.

34...♕g4+ 35.♕xg4 ♖xg4 36.♘f3 Now it was time for a decoy-cum-promotion tactic that I remembered from my childhood.



36...♖g1+

Carlsen thought for a while and gave up. When he shook my hand and congratulated me, I didn't feel anything special. After all, it was just one game in a knock-out event. After the game all my relatives and friends, colleagues and fans congratulated me. It must have been a good achievement and something special. I really appreciate their love and support.

■ ■ ■

Carlsen wasn't the only big shot who was sent packing. Who could have predicted that after only three rounds, six players of the world top-10 would have been eliminated? Quickly read this list: Carlsen, Kramnik, Caruana, Mamedyarov, Anand and Nakamura. The top favourites to win the 2017 World Cup? No, all of them eliminated within the first week. Looking at the live ratings, you could get the impression that a revolution was taking place. After the first game of Round 3 all players from the world top-20 had lost rating points, with the exception of Veselin Topalov and Leinier Dominguez, who stayed the same, because they were not in Tbilisi.

Celeb 64

John Henderson

Gregory Peck

Academy Award winner Gregory Peck was one of Hollywood's best-loved actors. Peck embodied a gently dignity, heroism and compassion in memorable films such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*. With ironic pathos, just a week before he died unexpectedly in 2003, the American Film Institute named his 1962 Oscar-winning role of Atticus Finch the top screen hero in Hollywood history. Many say that Peck was born to play Atticus Finch in the courtroom drama that also dwells on his character's relationship with his children co-stars. Acting with children is known to be difficult, but the screen legend soon formed an instant bond with his young co-stars by teaching them how to play chess between scenes, which is what's widely credited for their on-screen chemistry in the movie.

Peck was an avid chess player and was often photographed playing between scenes. During the filming of the 1961 World War II blockbuster *The Guns of Navarone*, chess is reputed to have defused the tension between the all-star cast, that included Hollywood legends Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn and rising co-stars Stanley Baker and Anthony Quayle.

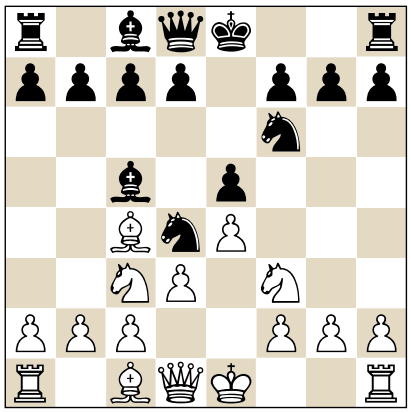
Luckily, the filming took place in Athens, so Quinn arranged for the delivery of his collection of chess sets. All the stars got hooked on playing chess and took out all their rivalry on the chessboards instead of before the cameras. ■

Hikaru Nakamura had to leave after an opening experiment in his second game against rising Russian star Vladimir Fedoseev ended in disaster.

NOTES BY
Vladimir Fedoseev

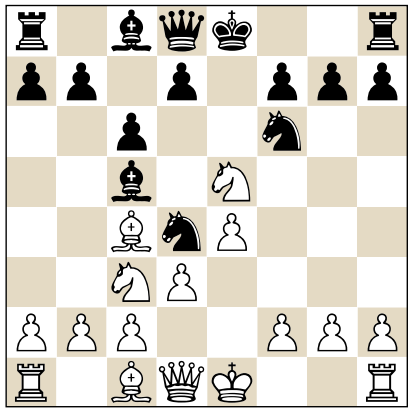
Vladimir Fedoseev
Hikaru Nakamura
Tbilisi 2017 (3.2)
Four Knights Opening

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♘d4 5.♗c4 ♗c5 6.d3



6...c6?!
It is strange to sacrifice a pawn when you are surprised in the opening. Instead, 6...d6! was clearly better. Here Black can calculate a forced variation that leads to a drawish ending. I will show you my quick analysis of this line: 7.♘a4 b5! 8.♘xd4 bxc4 9.♘f5 ♗xf5 10.exf5 cxd3 11.♘xc5 dxc5 12.♕xd3 ♕xd3 13.cxd3 0-0-0 14.♔e2 ♘d5! (the key move. It's not a clear draw, but at least Black's chances are not worse) 15.♖d1!? (15.f6!? would be a last attempt to see a reaction of shock on your opponent's face, but it's not really serious, as 15...gxf6, 15...g6 or 15...♖hg8 are all good enough for a draw) 15...♖d6! 16.g3, and now Black's best chance is 16...♖b6!, when White has to play accurately: 17.♖d2! ♘b4 18.b3 ♖a6 19.♗b2 f6 20.♗c3 ♘d5 21.♖c2 ♘e7 22.♗b2 ♖a5! 23.♗c3 ♖a6, with an equal position, also if White tries 24.♗d2 ♘xf5 25.♗e3 ♘d4+ 26.♗xd4 cxd4 27.♖ac1 ♔b8 28.♖xc7 ♖xa2+ 29.♔f1, and this should end in a draw.
The other alternative was 6...0-0, when I was planning to sacrifice two pieces for a rook and two pawns: 7.♘xe5 d6 8.♘xf7 ♖xf7 9.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 10.h3, and I am 100% sure that this is easy play for White.

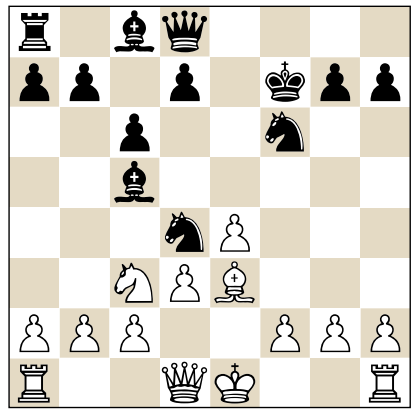
7.♘xe5



7...0-0?! I am sure this is a mistake. You should never allow your opponent to take on f7.
He should have played 7...d5!? 8.exd5 cxd5 9.♗b3 ♗d6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 ♖e8 and during the game I calculated this line to a spectacular end: 12.♗f4 ♕c7 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5 ♗xe5 15.c3! ♗g4 16.♕xg4 ♗xf4 17.cxd4 ♗xh2+ 18.♔h1 ♖xe1+ 19.♖xe1 ♗d6, when White is better, but Black has good chances to make a draw.

8.♘xf7! After all, I had already analysed this with a tempo less.

8...♖xf7 9.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 10.♗e3
After the game Nakamura told me that he had missed this move.

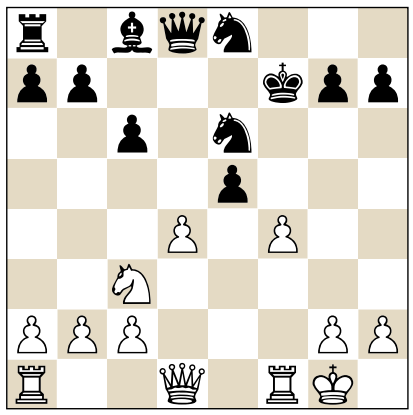


10...♘e6?? What?? Apparently my opponent had a terrible day; he must

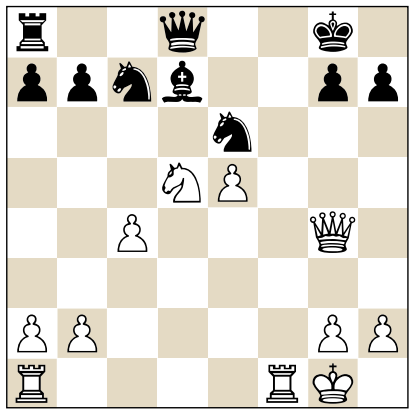
ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

Vladimir Fedoseev: 'It is strange to sacrifice a pawn when you are surprised in the opening.'

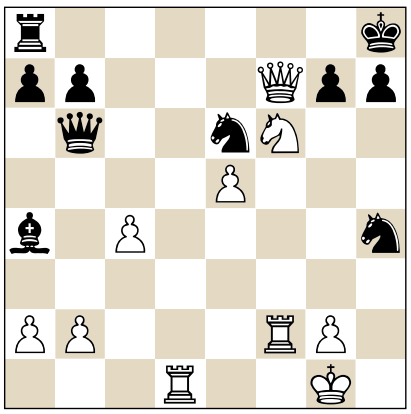
have been unnerved by the course of the game to make such a bad move. The correct way to play was 10...d5.
11.♗xc5 ♘xc5 12.e5 ♘e8 13.d4 ♘e6 By now I was getting a bit nervous, as I understood that I had a winning position.
14.0-0 Here 14.f4 was better.
14...d6?! 15.f4 dxe5



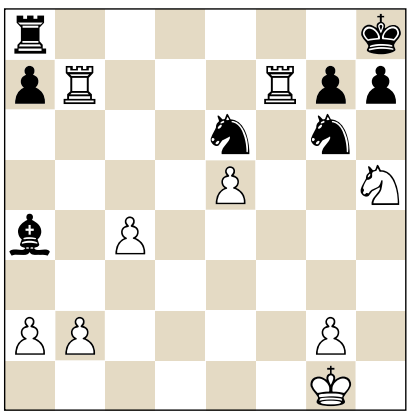
16.fxe5+?! The other pawn, 16.dxe5!, would have been stronger, and White should be winning.
16...♔g8 17.d5 cxd5 18.♘xd5 ♘8c7 19.c4 ♗d7 Now it's a fight again. White is still better, but I have wasted a good part of my advantage.
20.♕g4!



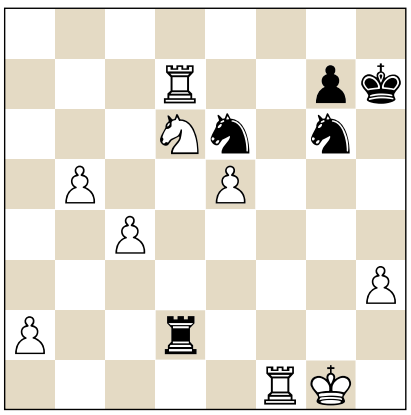
20...♘f8! 20...♔h8? 21.♖f7 ♗e8? invites a beautiful mate: 22.♕xg7+! ♘xg7 23.♖f8 mate.
21.♕f3 ♘g6 22.♖ad1 ♘e6 23.h4! I understood that I had to add fuel to the fire. **23...♘xh4** This invites a forced variation. Perhaps his best chance was 23...♔h8!? 24.h5 ♘gf8 25.h6 gxh6 26.b4, which looks pretty bad but defensible for Black.
24.♕f7+ ♔h8 25.♘f6 ♕b6+ 26.♖f2 ♗a4 An interesting try was 26...♘g5!?, when White should play 27.♘xd7 ♕e3 28.♕d5 ♘e4 29.♕d4, and White is winning.



27.♖d6 Much better was 27.♘d5!, but I was not sure if it was winning. It is after 27...♕d8 28.b3 ♘g5 29.♕xb7!.
A clear mistake would have been 27.b3?!, when after 27...♘g5 28.♕e7 ♘g6 White's advantage has evaporated.
27...♘g5 28.♕e7 ♘f5 29.♖xb6 ♘xe7 30.♖xb7 ♘g6 31.♘h5 ♘e6 32.♖ff7!



32...♗e8 The best chance was 32...♗d1!, as after 33.♘xg7 Black has 33...♘d8!, but after 33.♖xa7 ♖xa7 34.♖xa7 ♗xh5 35.c5 White is clearly on top. **33.♖xa7 ♖d8 34.♖f1 ♔g8 35.♘g3 h5 36.♘f5 ♔h7 37.b4 h4 38.b5 ♖d2 39.♘d6 h3 40.gxh3 ♗d7 41.♖xd7**



41...♘g5 Also hopeless is 41...♘xe5 42.♖e7 ♖xd6 43.c5, and wins. **42.♖f5 ♘h4 43.♖xg7+** Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

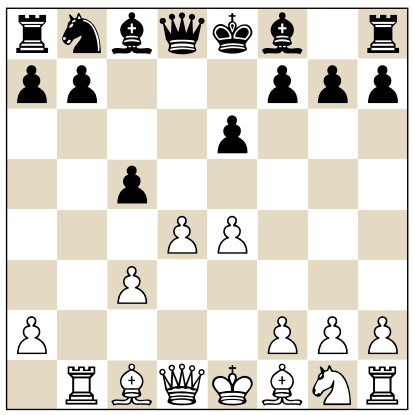
Another relative young Russian, 26-year-old Maxim Matlakov, showed incredible fighting spirit and resilience in his Round-3 match against another of the top favourites, Levon Aronian. Twice the Russian fought back after a loss, first in the classical games and again in the fourth game of the tiebreak. Aronian prevailed in the end, and in hindsight you could say that here he showed that he had come for a prolonged stay and with only one goal in mind.

But this was the baffling and brilliant come-back by Matlakov after he had lost the first classical game.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Maxim Matlakov
Levon Aronian
Tbilisi 2017 (3.2)
Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3
Inviting the Nimzo is a decent choice in a must-win situation against a player as well-prepared as Levon Aronian. Lev, however, having anticipated both this choice as well as 1.c4, had decided to use Kramnik's favourite for this game, the ever-solid and ever-depressing Semi-Tarrasch.
3...d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.♖b1!?



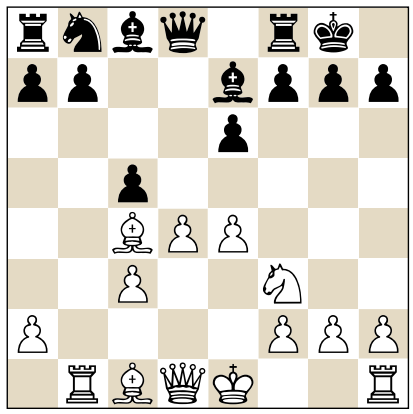
ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

Maxim Matlakov showed stunning resilience bouncing back twice against Levon Aronian, but the Armenian favourite didn't flinch and in the end he prevailed, 4½-3½.

After people came to realize that 7.a3 can be met by 7...g6!, which is probably a good Grünfeld, this remained as the only way to not enter the main lines of this opening with 7.♘f3.

7...♗e7 In the Grünfeld, ♖b1, unlike a3, is an extremely useful move, so 7...g6 is no option here.

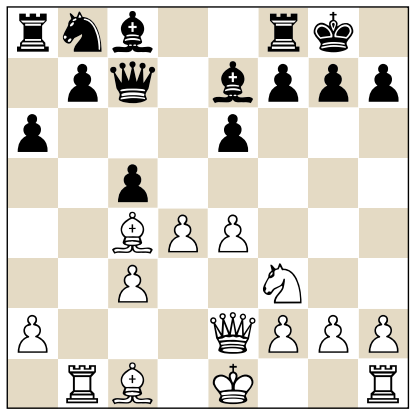
8.♘f3 0-0 9.♗c4



9...♕c7!?

The latest fashion, an idea of Leinier Dominguez. After 9...♘c6, which was played by Matlakov and his good friend Svidler, White managed to pose Black some problems: 10.0-0 b6 11.d5 ♘a5 12.♗d3 c4 13.♗c2 exd5 14.exd5 ♗b7 15.♖e1 was seen in Matlakov-Shimanov and Svidler-Hou Yifan, both played this year.

10.♕e2 a6

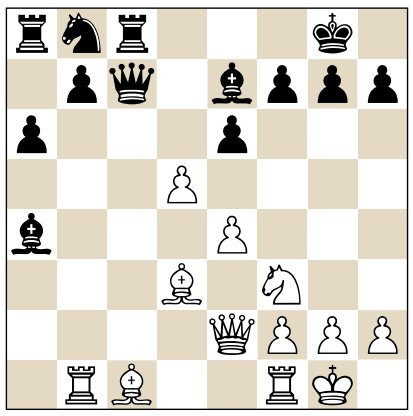


11.a4 Probably improvisation. What White did in the opening of this game is unlikely to be repeated, even though it worked miracles on this important day.

Instead, 11.0-0 b5 12.♗d3 ♘d7 13.h4 e5 14.h5 h6 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 c4 17.♗c2 ♕xe5 was seen in Navara-Dominguez, St. Louis 2017 (0-1, 45), but surely White's play can and should be improved upon.

11...cxd4 12.cxd4 ♗d7 13.0-0 ♖c8 The immediate 13...♗xa4!? was also possible.

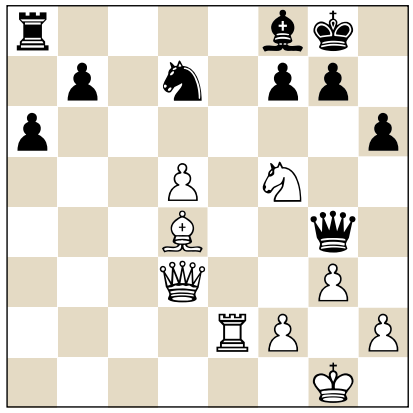
14.♗d3 ♗xa4 15.d5



15...♘d7

Black could have tried 15...e5!?.

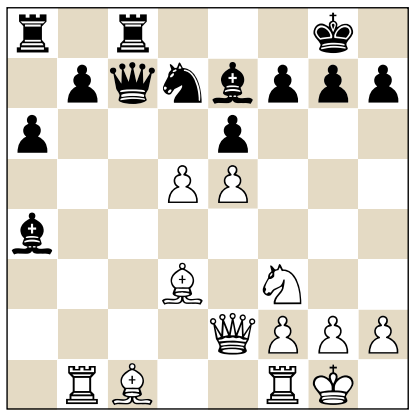
And 15...exd5? 16.exd5 ♗b5 was suggested by Aronian after the game, if we are to believe Matlakov, which, although it simplifies the position, with the knight still on b8 is no good: 17.♖e1! (I tried to delve more deeply into this variation to see if Levon's judgment is better than that of my computer, and it's not that Levon is not great, it's that my computer is really, really, really strong) 17...♗xd3 18.♕xd3 h6 19.♗b2 ♗c5 20.♘h4 ♘d7 21.♘f5 ♕f4 22.♖e2 ♖e8 23.g3 ♕g4 24.♖be1 ♖xe2 25.♖xe2 ♗f8 26.♗d4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

is apparently semi-forced and apparently semi-lost for Black. d6 is next and the queen on g4 is also semi-trapped.

16.e5

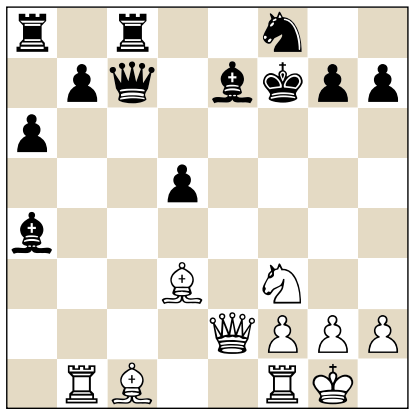


16...exd5? Played because what else? And because Levon must have missed the brilliant idea that White unleashed on move 20.

16...♘c5! would have been a miraculous save: 17.d6 ♕d7! 18.♗xh7+

♔xh7 19.dxe7 ♕d3!, and Black is just in time to defend himself. Not an easy line to see, or to recognize that this actually works for Black.

17.e6 ♘f8 18.exf7+ ♔xf7

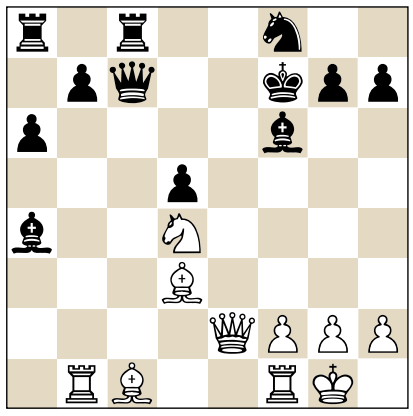


19.♘d4? White's and Black's 19th moves were little to-and-fro gifts. I think both sides had not yet noticed the main trick in the position.

White should have played 19.♖e1! ♗f6 20.♗xh7! Now it wins, as in the game, but other than in the game, the 19...♔g8 option is not there after 19.♖e1!.

19...♗f6?

19...♔g8! would have brought Black back to life. White still has a lot of potential for a kingside attack, but objectively speaking Black is doing fine here, having two extra pawns and still being far from getting mated.

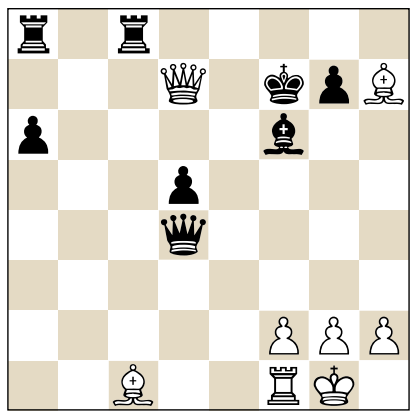


20.♗xh7!! A brilliant shot. Now it's suddenly lights out.

20...♕e5 20...♘xh7 21.♕e6+ ♔f8 22.♗a3+ ♗e7 23.♖bc1!, and the black queen is overloaded.

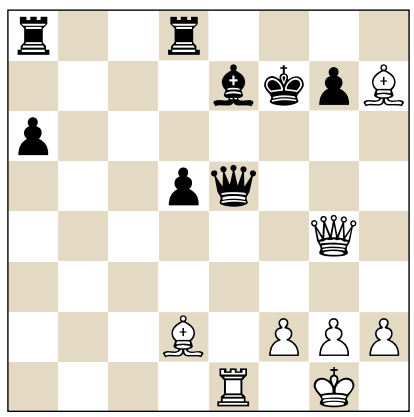
And 20...♗xd4 21.♕h5+ doesn't save either, for example 21...g6 22.♕xd5+ ♔g7 runs into the simple 23.♖xb7.

21.♖xb7+ ♗d7 22.♕g4 ♕xd4 23.♖xd7+ ♘xd7 24.♕xd7+



The bishop on h7 is a brilliant piece, making sure the king can't escape the onslaught. The rest is just a matter of getting the f1-rook and the c1-bishop to join the party.

24...♗e7 25.♖e1 ♕e5 26.♗d2 ♖d8 27.♕g4



Black resigned. The most beautiful justification were the symmetrical variations 27...♕d6 28.♗b4 and 27...♕f6 28.♗g5.

■ ■ ■

While various favourites had to leave early, other 'usual suspects' progressed further. Peter Svidler can safely be called a knock-out specialist. Just remember his third win in the Russian Championship in 1997, his win in the World Cup in 2011 and the dramatic (lost) final against Sergey Karjakin in Baku two years ago. In Tbilisi, he reached Round 5 by knocking out Bu Xiangzhi, and there his journey ended in the tiebreak against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Svidler's most entertaining game was in the rapid tiebreak against Viktor Erdös from Hungary in Round 2.

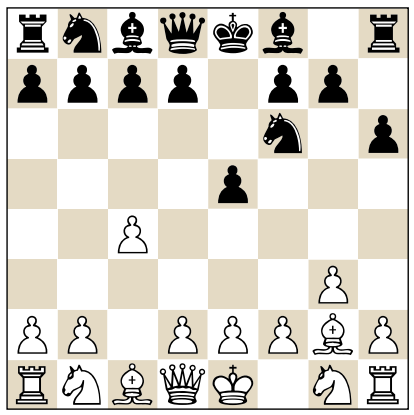
NOTES BY

Peter Svidler

Peter Svidler
Viktor Erdös
Tbilisi 2017 (2.3)
English Opening

The classical portion of our match lasted 29 moves spread over two games, so I think it is fair to say we were both looking forward to the tiebreaks.

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 h6



I've seen people do this before, but compared to other issues I have on the white side of the English, this did not seem to warrant a serious investigation. Perhaps more importantly, this signalled my opponent's desire to just play a game of chess, starting as early as possible – which suited my mood just fine.

4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.e4 Not the only move in the position, but I reasoned that if it's playable when Black has already castled, it should be decent vs ...h6 as well.

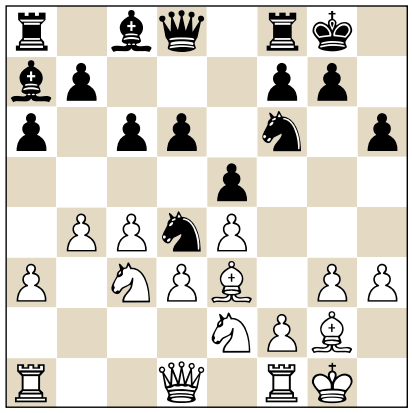
5...d6 6.♘ge2 ♘c6 7.h3

White will have to play these moves – h3, d3, a3 – in some order, and I decided that ruling out a potential ...♗g4 is a good start. I also did not want to castle yet – Black could easily change his mind and go for ...h5-h4 plans if I do it too early.

7...♗c5 8.a3 a6

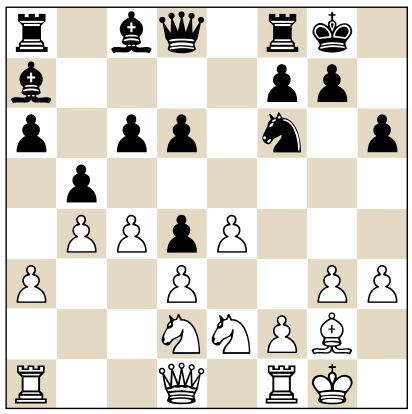
8...a5, stopping my queenside expansion, worried me as well, but this is more restrained, and has the upside of not allowing ♘b5 at any point, which could become relevant if Black is planning to play ...♘d4 later.

9.d3 ♘d4 10.b4 ♗a7 11.♗e3 0-0 12.0-0 c6



All perfectly logical – Black is now ready to play ...b7-b5, putting some pressure on the white centre. After some thought I decided the structure needed to change.

13.♗xd4 exd4 14.♘b1 Not an easy decision – White will obviously lose quite a bit of time bringing that knight back – but he has a clearly defined plan, mainly centred on playing against the bishop on a7, Black's only bad piece. **14...b5 15.♘d2**

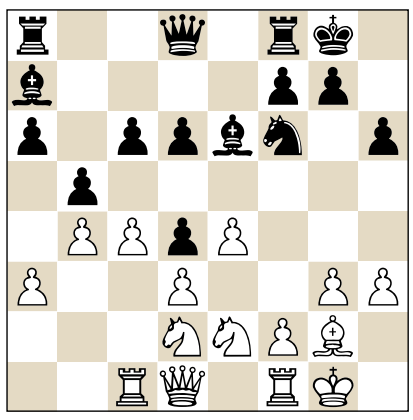


15...♗e6?! A move I had both expected and hoped for. As a matter of fact, this move and the two that followed it are very nice examples of hand largely overruling brain. 15...♗e6 looks perfectly natural, but if you stop and think for a bit, you would realize that it's only going to give up a tempo to an eventual ♘f4, whilst the threat of 16...bxc4 can be adequately met in a number of easy ways. Much stronger was 15...♗d7, planning to play ...c5 as soon as possible.

16.♖c1?

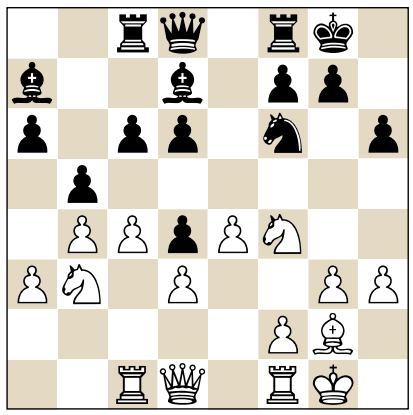
The same kind of knee-jerk reaction from me. The c4-pawn is attacked, and can be protected by developing a piece – why waste time thinking?

More to the point was 16.cxb5! axb5 17.a4, stopping the ...c6-c5 counter-play in its tracks, and securing a very pleasant edge mainly due to that horrible bishop on a7.



16...♖c8?! The immediate 16...c5! 17.bxc5 ♗xc5 was far stronger: 18.♘f3 ♕b6, with a very unclear position in which Black could already be fighting for an advantage.

17.♘f4 ♗d7 18.♘b3



This is the position I was roughly aiming for when taking on d4 on move 13. White is threatening to play 19.c5, and I assumed that the complications arising after Black's semi-forced ...c6-c5 should favour White. In that, I was wrong. Black now needs to be precise – but he is still doing perfectly well.

18...c5 19.bxc5 bxc4

This is where Black's problems start. This move is not bad in itself but it was clearly connected with the wrong plan. Black has to recapture on c5 with the bishop, to force White to trade it for the knight on b3.

Play with the world's best correspondence chess players on one of the most advanced chess servers in the world.

Register at: **www.iccf-webchess.com**

Join a team of thousands playing great chess at ICCF.

ICCF also offers World Championships, Olympiads, and many other Team and Individual Tournaments where you can participate from any place around the globe.

View live games of the world's best players – also free games downloads.

Contact us at: **www.iccf.com**

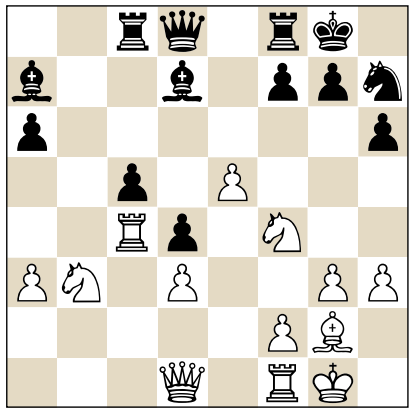
ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

Knock-out specialist Peter Svidler lived up to his reputation, but had to leave Tbilisi after he was eliminated in the tiebreak of Round 5 by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

20.♖xc4 dxc5? Only after this move will White be able to claim any advantage. 20...♗xc5 was much better.

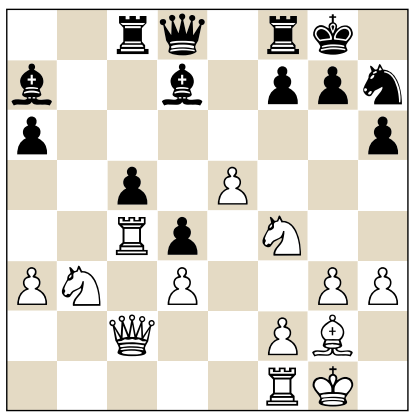
21.e5 ♘h7

21...g5 was arguably a better choice, but after 22.♘h5 ♘xh5 23.♕xh5 ♔g7 24.♘d2 White has a stable edge.



22.♕c2?! From this moment on, I became quite obsessed with the idea of leaving the rook on c4, and offering the exchange if it ever got attacked. It is a very appealing concept aesthetically – if there is always a piece on c4, the bishop on a7 is essentially dead – but there was a simpler (and as so often, also stronger) way to go about things here.

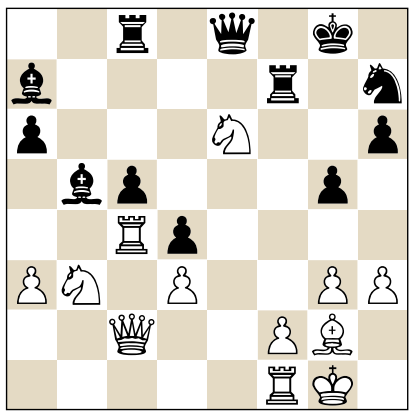
22.h4 ♖e8 23.♖e1 ♘f8 24.♗d5 leads to a very unpleasant position for Black. Eventually he will have to trade the minor pieces on e6, probably two sets of them, leaving himself with the bishop on a7 vs the knight, which will eventually land on c4.



22...g5

The more natural 22...♗b5 allows two different ways of sacrificing the exchange, both quite playable:

A) During the game, I was leaning towards 23.e6!?, completely missing 23...g5! (everything else gives White a large edge due to the weakness of the light squares, and yes the horrible bishop on a7). The following are machine lines, generally ending in 0. 00, while in practice I suspect White would find it easier to navigate: 24.exf7+ (24.♖e1 gxf4 25.e7 ♕b6 26.exf8♖+ ♖xf8 27.gxf4 ♘f6!? 28.♖xc5 ♗a4 29.♖c6 ♗xc6 30.♕xc6 ♕xc6 31.♗xc6 ♖c8=) 24...♖xf7 25.♘e6 ♕e8!

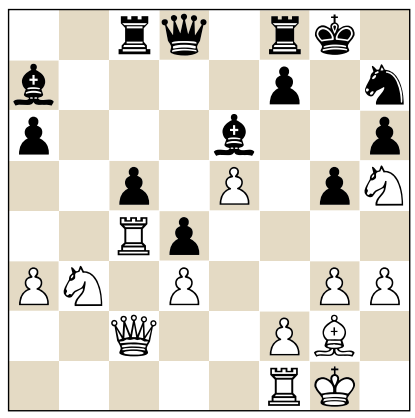


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The only move. Black needs to keep the rook on c8 protected to stop ♘xd4 tactics: 26.a4 ♗xc4 27.♕xc4 ♔h8 28.♕xa6 ♖e7 29.♖e1 ♘f8, and Black is just in time to challenge White's control: 30.♗d5 ♘xe6 31.♖xe6 ♖xe6 32.♗xe6 ♖c6 33.♕xa7 ♕xe6 34.♘xc5 ♕xh3, with enough counterplay.

B) 23.a4!? is also quite interesting, and could objectively be the stronger of the two: 23...♗xc4 24.♕xc4 ♗b8! (Black needs to stop e6, or he would be in grave danger) 25.♖e1 ♖e8 26.♗d5 ♕e7 27.♘a5 (27.e6 ♔h8! is unclear) 27...♘f6! 28.♘c6 ♕c7 29.♗f3, and it's obvious that White has more than enough for the exchange, but Black might hold with precise play.

23.♘h5 ♗e6

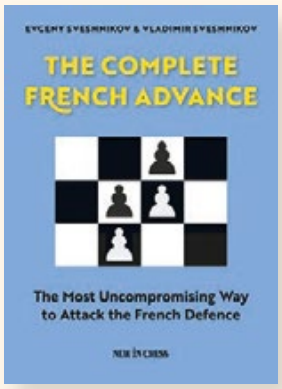


24.♘d2

I spent a grand total of five seconds considering 24.♖a4, which was significantly stronger. The thought of allowing 24...c4 25.dxc4 d3 just did not appeal to me at all but the heartless machine says White is close to winning after 26.♕c3 ♕d7 27.♖xa6 ♖xc4 28.♕a5!, and Black is not coordinated enough to make good use of his suddenly reanimated pieces.

24...f5 A good practical decision. With time getting very short – if

NEW IN CHESS bestsellers


EVGENY SVESHNIKOV & VLADIMIR SVESHNIKOV
THE COMPLETE FRENCH ADVANCE
The Most Uncompromising Way to Attack the French Defence
NEW IN CHESS

The Complete French Advance

The Most Uncompromising Way to Attack the French Defence

Evgeny & Vladimir Sveshnikov 288 pages - €29.95

"The author has great experience with this variation and his writings are full of information that any student of the game can learn from." – *GM Glenn Flear*

"A masterclass by the world expert." – *Anatoly Karpov*

"There is plenty of prose explanation and the book is spiced up by exercises to solve and lively observations." *IM John Donaldson*

The Berlin Defence Unraveled

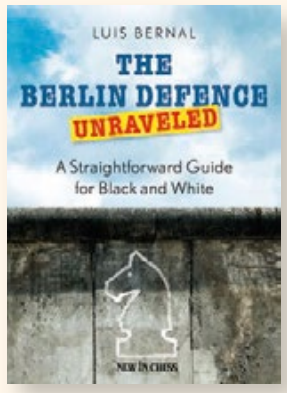
A Straightforward Guide for Black and White

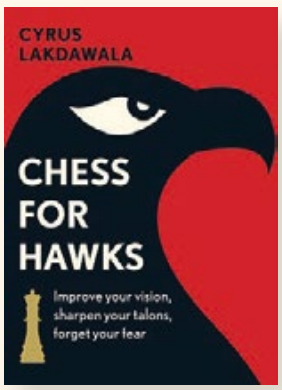
Luis Bernal 272 pages - €27.95

Finally: the Berlin + the Anti-Berlin for Club Players!

"The claim of 'unraveling' the Berlin is completely justified. An extremely instructive and clear-cut work." *Der Neue Tag Newspaper*

"Bernal investigates the latest theoretical developments, but hasn't skimped on explanation." – *GM Glenn Flear*





Chess for Hawks

Improve your vision, sharpen your talons, forget your fear

Cyrus Lakdawala 288 pages - €22.95

WINNER: Best Instructional Book
Chess Journalists of America

How good are you at refusing a draw offer? IM Lakdawala's fascinating and often hilarious story of his struggle to release his inner hawk. Learn how to ignore your natural inclination and just obey the position's requirements!

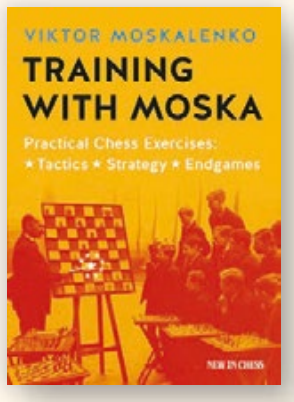
Training with Moska

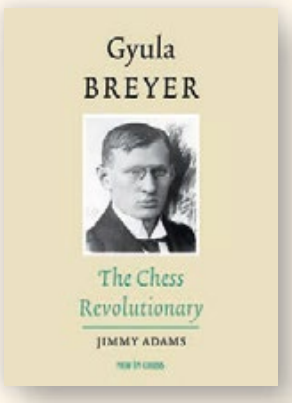
Practical Chess Exercises: Tactics, Strategy, Endgames

Viktor Moskalenko 336 pages - €27.95

"A wonderful training manual. It will bring all players with an Elo of 1600 or more a strong improvement of their playing strength." *IM Dirk Schuh, Rochade Europa Magazine*

"Another highly entertaining and instructive book (..) More books please, Moska!" *Sean Marsh, CHESS Magazine (UK)*





Gyula Breyer

The Chess Revolutionary

Jimmy Adams hardcover 880 pages - €45.95

A monumental book.

"Ranks at the top with Kasparov's various mega series, Nimzowitsch's 'My System' and Alekhine's books of his best games." – *GM Raymond Keene*

"The Hypermoderns owed much to Breyer, as becomes clear in this fine, detailed biography." – *CHESS Magazine*

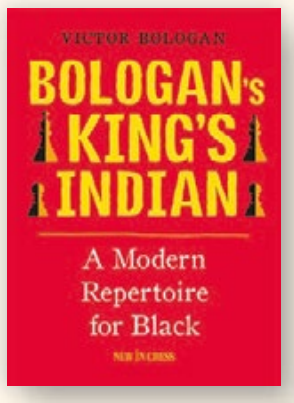
Bologan's King's Indian

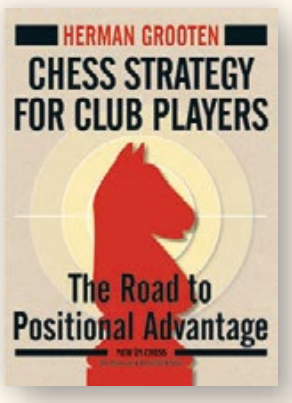
A Modern Repertoire for Black

Victor Bologan 368 pages - €29.95

In many lines Bologan presents two options to handle the Black position. With many new ideas and resources, and several offbeat sidelines that will enable you to surprise your opponent.

"Bologan's understanding of the King's Indian is second to few and here he maps out a pretty detailed repertoire for Black against all White's options." – *CHESS Magazine*





Chess Strategy for Club Players

The Road to Positional Advantage

Herman Grooten 464 pages - €27.95

Third, improved & extended edition

"If you want to be a better player, you owe it to yourself to pick up a copy. It may well be the crown jewel of your chess book collection!" – *Jeremy Silman, US Chess Online*

"A highly instructive book for readers who want to improve their chess skills." – *Jan Timman*

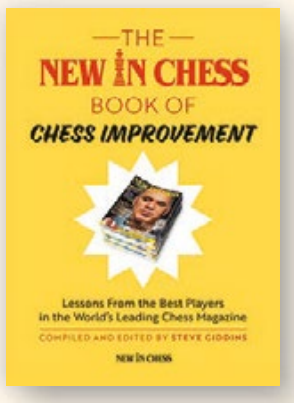
The New In Chess Book of Chess Improvement

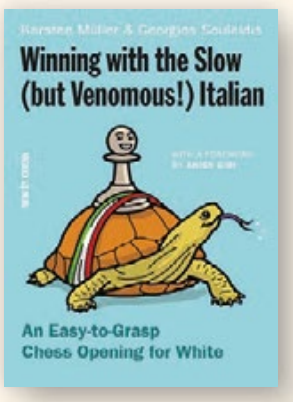
Lessons from the Best Players in the World's Leading Chess Magazine

Steve Giddins (editor) 336 pages - €22.95

For more than three decades, every issue of New In Chess magazine has been full of annotations by the world's best players of their own best games. Steve Giddins has arranged the most didactic examples into thematic chapters.

"With notes by the likes of Kasparov, Kramnik, Tal and Timman, it seems unlikely that most players won't learn plenty from this compendium." – *CHESS Magazine*


THE NEW IN CHESS BOOK OF CHESS IMPROVEMENT
Lessons From the Best Players in the World's Leading Chess Magazine
NEW IN CHESS



Winning with the Slow (but Venomous!) Italian

An Easy-to-Grasp Chess Opening for White

Karsten Müller & Georgios Souleidis 240 pages - €27.95

Looks innocent, but is actually full of venom. Ideal for club players and champions: Magnus plays it, too!

"A brilliant book." – *ChessBase News*

"Contains some highly powerful ideas." *IM Dirk Schuh, Rochade Europa Magazine*

The Agile London System

A Solid but Dynamic Chess Opening Choice for White

Alfonso Romero & Oscar de Prado 336 pages - €26.95

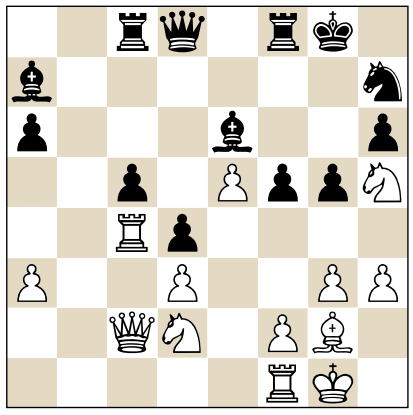
BACK IN STOCK

Reveals the secrets behind sharp ideas such as the Barry Attack, the Jobava Attack and the hyper-aggressive Pereyra Attack.

"With plenty of fresh material that should ensure that it will be the reference work on the complete London System for years to come." – *GM Glenn Flear*

available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com

I remember correctly, for the rest of the game Viktor would balance around the 2-minute mark or even lower – Black needs to find targets for counterplay, and devising ways to attack the somewhat stranded knight on h5 is vital.

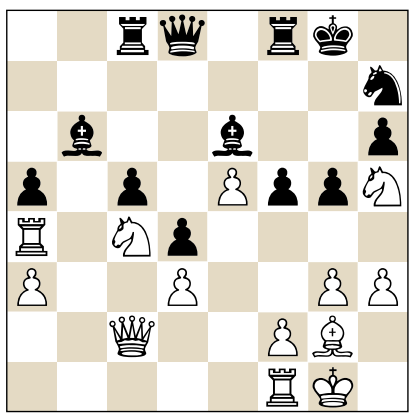


ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

Georgian WGM Keti Tsatsalashvili and fellow commentator Ivan Sokolov, who, before they had time to ask, answered the viewers' obvious question with a deadpan 'That's what you get when you go out with Jobava.'

25.♖a4!? Doesn't spoil much yet, but there was no need for this decadence. After 25.♕a4 a5 26.♖cc1 ♗f7 27.♗f3 White is much better, and, quite significantly, none of his pieces are likely to become marooned on the edges of the board.

25...a5! 26.♘c4 ♗b6!

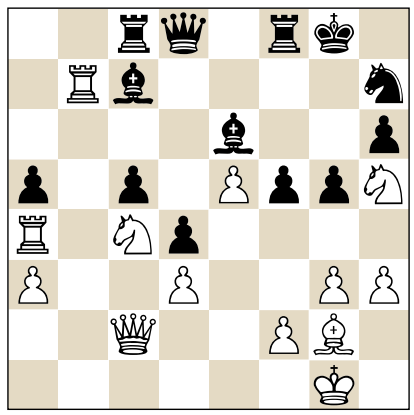


When we spoke after the match, Viktor told me how difficult these two moves were. Black is giving up tempo after tempo to preserve the a-pawn, which seems like scant reward. But much more importantly, he is fighting to keep the rook on a4, and giving me a chance to get carried away with my conceptual approach.

27.♖b1? It seems weird to call such an obvious move a mistake but from this moment onwards, the game becomes a mess, particularly as we were both approaching worse and worse time-trouble.

27.♘xb6 ♕xb6 28.♖b1 ♕c7 29.f4 or 27.♘d6 ♖b8 28.f4 would still give White a comfortable edge but how do you say 'no' to occupying the open file, and then the 7th, with tempo?

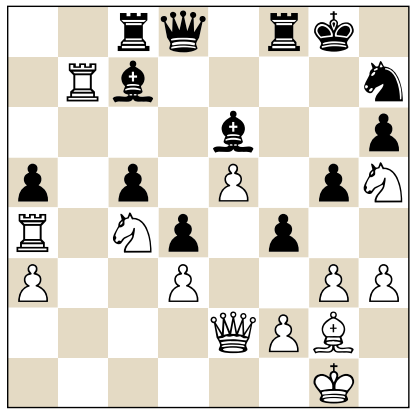
27...♗c7 28.♖b7



28...f4! When going for this line, I saw that 28...♕e8 runs into the very nice geometrical shot 29.♘g7! (we'll see this idea again) 29...♔xg7 30.♘d6, and White crashes through, and decided this has to be good enough.

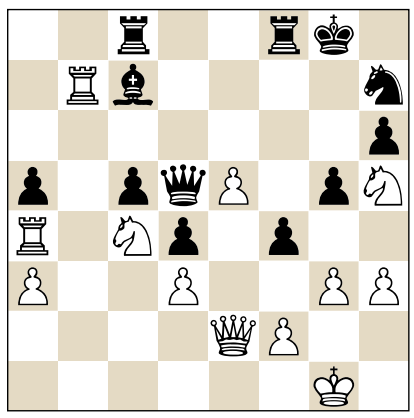
After 28...f4 I suddenly realized that the position is a lot messier than I originally thought. My dominance of the light squares is all good and well, but with at least two of my pieces not really participating in the game, I am only a couple of trades away from trouble.

29.♕e2 Allowing ...f3, shutting down my prized bishop, was not a nice thought. The other way to avoid it was to play 29.♗e4, but after 29...fxg3 30.fxg3 ♗d5 it's anybody's game. Adjusting to the drastic changes also took away most of my time advantage.



29...♗d5! Another strong move in severe time-trouble. 29...f3 doesn't work yet: 30.♗xf3 ♖xf3 31.♕xf3 ♗d5 32.♕f5!, with mate.

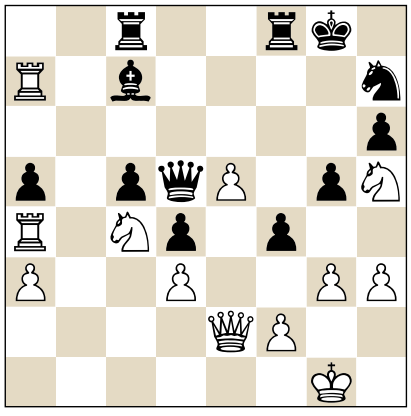
30.♗xd5+ ♕xd5



31.♖a7

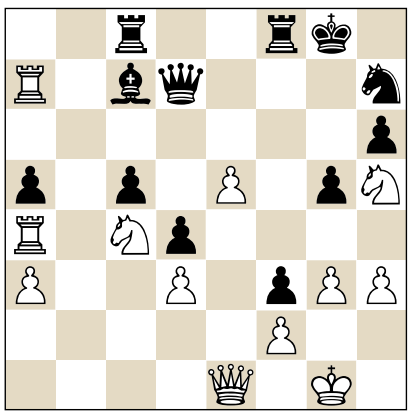
I saw the idea of the rook sacrifice that happened in the game, and went for it.

It might have been better to simplify with 31.♕e4, but the position after 31...♕xe4 32.dxe4 d3, despite the queen trade, is still a mess.



31...f3? Harsh, but after this move White even has a choice of good moves, for the first time in a while. 31...♖b8 was much stronger, with Black holding his own after both 32.♘d2 fxg3 33.♘xg3 ♗b6 34.♖e7 ♗d8 35.♖a7 ♗b6 and 32.f3 32...fxg3 33.♔g2 ♖f7 34.e6 ♖e7 35.♕e4, even though finding the absolutely necessary 35...♕d8!! would have been hard work on a minute. Amazingly, Black is not even slightly worse here, according to the machine.

32.♕e1 I was totally zoned in on the rook sacrifice but both 32.♕d1 and 32.♕f1 would also give White an edge here. Having removed the option of ...fxg3 really hurts Black in this position. **32...♕d7**



33.e6! ♕xa4 34.e7?

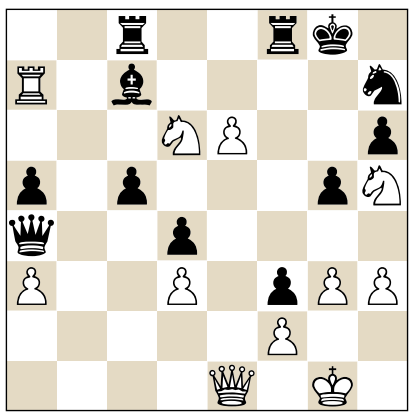
I spent about two seconds on this move, which allows Black a reasonably comfortable way out (with even slightly more time on the clock, I'm sure Viktor would have solved this puzzle). When he told me, later that

Classic	Rapid	Blitz			
#	↑↓	Name	Classic	+/−	
1		Carlsen	2826.0	−1.0	
2	Live	Kramnik	2799.8	−3.2	
3	↑1	Aronian	2798.6	−3.4	
4	↓2	Vachier-Lagrave	2796.2	−7.8	
5		Caruana	2793.8	−5.2	
6		Mamedyarov	2791.4	−5.6	
7	↑1	So	2787.4	−4.6	
8	↑1	Grischuk	2784.8	−3.2	
9	↓2	Anand	2782.8	−11.2	
10		Nakamura	2773.6	−7.4	
11	Live	Giri	2770.5	−6.5	
12	↓1	Karjakin	2765.2	−14.8	
13		Ding Liren	2764.4	−6.6	
14	Live	Svidler	2755.4	−0.6	
15	↑1	Topalov	2749.0	0.0	
16	↓1	Yu Yangyi	2743.0	−7.0	
17	↑2	Radjabov	2740.6	−1.4	
18	↓1	Wei Yi	2740.4	−7.6	
19	↓1	Li Chao	2739.2	−5.8	
20	↑3	Dominguez Perez	2739.0	0.0	

A unique sight: the live ratings after the first game of Round 3. All top-20 GMs present in Tbilisi have lost rating points.

day, about the move that I should have played instead, we both just laughed out loud at how insane the idea of finding it over the board is, especially on very limited time.

White wins with 34.♘d6!!, creating, as it turns out, the unstoppable threat of ♕e5. Once you see this idea, finding the rest is quite manageable:

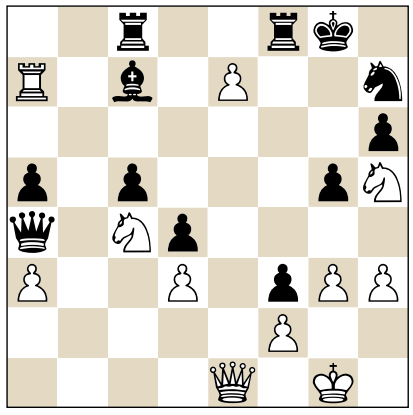


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 34...♗xd6 35.♕e4, and the fact that the knight on h7 is hanging means that Black can't stop all the threats: 35...♕d1+ 36.♔h2 ♗xg3+ 37.♘xg3 with mate in 5.

B) For geometry lovers: 34...♕c6 35.♕e5 ♘f6 36.♘xc8!! ♗xe5 37.♘e7+ ♔h7 38.♘xc6+, and White collects everything.

C) 34...♘f6 35.♘xc8 ♘xh5 36.♖xc7, and White crashes through. The current figure on my screen is mate in 11 with equal material, and zero current mating threats.

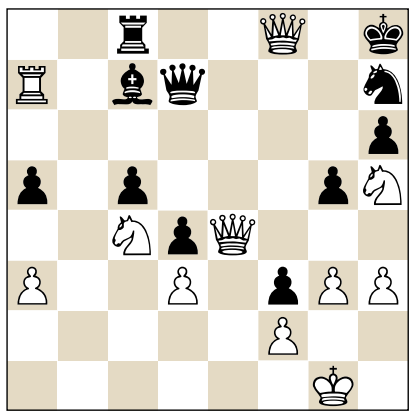


34...♕d7?

A losing mistake and a very natural one to make when playing on increments. Black wants threats of his own but ...♕xh3 will remain a pipe-dream. It was crucial to control all the squares the queen on e1 can get to: 34...♕c6! 35.exf8♕+ ♔xf8, and it feels to me that White would find it harder than Black to find the good moves from here onwards.

35.♕e4 Now it's all over; Black won't be able to control all the threats.

35...♔h8 35...♖f5 loses to both the brutal 36.♖xc7 and the more refined 36.♘b6. **36.exf8♕+**

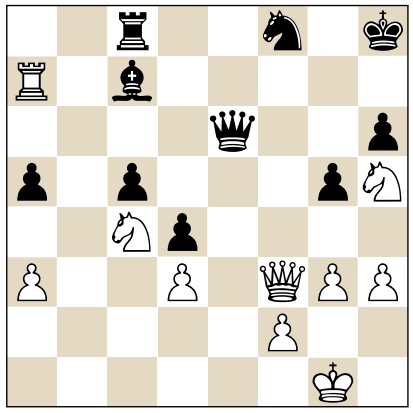


During his Round-1 tiebreaks, Viktor made a slight technical mistake when promoting a pawn (you now have to use one hand for all the motions involved). Because of that, the arbiters very specifically mentioned the new promotion rules before the start of the second-round tiebreaks, and we shared a chuckle about it,

all of which makes it even harder to explain why, I'm fairly sure for the first time in my life, I just left the pawn on f8 when making this move, and pressed the clock. This was never legal, obviously not even before the rules were changed. Luckily for me, in rapid you don't lose the game for the first transgression, and the two minutes Viktor got were of very limited importance. It was still very embarrassing, though.

36.♘e5 ♕xh3 37.♘g6+ ♔g8 38.♘h4!! is another one of those 'yeah well, if you say so' machine lines no-one would ever play. It is quite beautiful, though.

36...♘xf8 36...♖xf8 37.♘e5 ♕xh3 38.♘g6+ ♔g8 39.♕d5+ ♖f7 40.♖a8 is mate. **37.♕xf3** A somewhat prosaic end but Black is completely helpless here; there are just too many threats. **37...♕e6** Stopping 38.♘e5 and 38.♘b6, but...



38.♖xc7 ♖xc7 39.♕xf8+ ♔h7 40.♘f6+ ♔g6 41.♘e4

And Black resigned. A flawed game, but a very enjoyable one, nonetheless.

■ ■ ■

While Svidler went under in the tiebreak against Vachier-Lagrave, the only other Russian still in the race, Vladimir Fedoseev, was beaten in a fine technical struggle in his second classical game against Wesley So. For the first time, the World Cup saw an all-Asian semifinal, as So was to meet Ding Liren. In Round 5, China's top player had stopped Richard Rapport, who in earlier rounds had eliminated both Wei Yi and Li Chao. In the other semifinal, Aronian and Vachier-Lagrave were to battle it out.

Wesley So's World Cup ended after a tense fight with Ding Liren. As he left Tbilisi, the American seemed to be happier with what he had achieved than what he had failed to do. Those feelings were probably influenced by the good chance that he will qualify for the Candidates anyway, based on his high average rating all through the year.

So regarded his win against Fedoseev as his finest accomplishment. Here it is with his comments and some more general thoughts about the World Cup.

NOTES BY
Wesley So

Wesley So
Vladimir Fedoseev
Tbilisi 2017 (2)
Petroff Defence, Jaenisch Variation

What's it like when the planet's top 128 chess players gather together in one place?

The first day, excitement rules! In the hotel lobby, players wave at you, shout greetings, pose for pictures. They give big hugs to those they haven't seen for a while and gather in cheerful groups to head for the dining hall. There is a lot of happy noise as they catch up, comment on the food, order special drinks, joke about the length and complication of airline flights to get here. It's a big party.

Within 24 hours things have changed. The common areas are now very quiet and any players you see are making every effort to avoid eye contact. In the dining hall, everyone sits as far as possible from everyone else. The walk to the elevators is carefully timed, so you don't accidentally share one with an opponent. You carefully consider who you should talk to and how much you should say. The smiles are grim. We've all suddenly remembered that, no, this isn't a party. We are gladiators and our fights to the death are about to begin.

I want to thank Akaki Iashvili, the arbiters, and all the FIDE staff for a professionally run event. It's not easy to coordinate hundreds of people and satisfy their demands and expectations. They did a great job.

The Georgian people have known great suffering in the past, but I was very impressed with how kind they are in spite of that. Apart from the various good wishes extended to me (although I was the cause of much pain over Jobava getting knocked out), I saw their true spirit in another very revealing way.

Georgia has thousands of homeless dogs and cats. Yet in my five weeks there, none that I saw looked starved and I never saw anyone so much as kick them. These poor animals have no permanent home, but they approach you with wagging tail and sit politely hoping for a hand-out or a pat on the head. They seem to love people and will follow you everywhere if you let them. That means people have been good to them, and it is rare to see this in a country where people struggle to survive. It says a lot about Georgian hearts.

Every night after the match it became our habit to take our left-over dinner food and walk through the streets

'The smiles are grim. We've all suddenly remembered that, no, this isn't a party. We are gladiators and our fights to the death are about to begin.'

feeding stray animals. It was a very relaxing change from constantly trying to kill someone over the chess board.

I faced fiercely inspired players throwing everything they had at me on a daily basis. No matter that you won your last fight. That's quickly forgotten, and now you have to win the next. The pressure never lets up. Soon enough, I was in the sights of the Russian GM Vladimir Fedoseev. He had already taken several important scalps and it was very clear he was measuring mine from across the room.

1.e4

Fabiano Caruana's favourite move!

1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

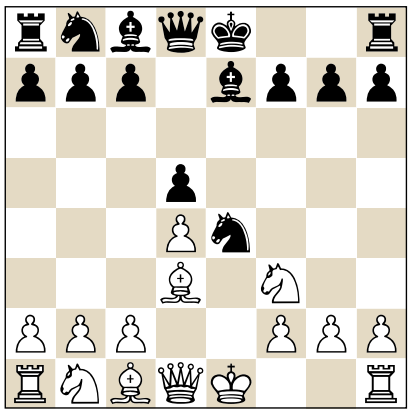
The Petroff! If I remember correctly, Fedoseev plays five or six different openings against 1.e4, but never the Petroff. I played this against him in the first game (with colours reversed), and it's not too difficult to add new openings to your repertoire these days, with all the engines and databases that everyone has.

3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.d4

The other critical line 5.♘c3 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 didn't go well when I played it against a well-prepared Jobava a few days before.

5...d5 6.♗d3 ♗e7

6...♗d6 was my choice the day before. Both moves are very solid.



7.0-0 ♘c6 I had expected 7...♗f5.

8.♘bd2 As I said in an interview after the game, when Dutchman Anish Giri plays a move in the opening, it's gotta be good! Well I am not always successful when I copy his opening ideas (like in my loss against Karjakin), but I gotta keep trying!

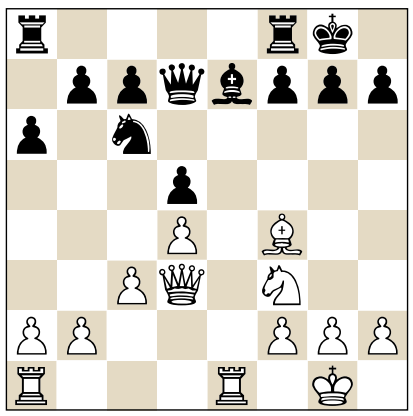
8...♗f5 8...♘d6 was how Giri's game went a few months ago.

9.♖e1 ♘xd2 10.♕xd2 ♗xd3 11.♕xd3 0-0 12.c3

Protecting b4 from any annoying knight jump ideas.

12...♕d7 13.♗f4 a6

Protecting b5 from any annoying queen jump ideas.



14.♖e2

I was taking my time pondering the difference between having a rook on e2 and having one on e3. Later I found out that the two Big K's had all this covered when they played a similar game 35 years ago!

14.♖e3 was Kasparov's choice against Karpov in Moscow in 1981 (½-½, 41).

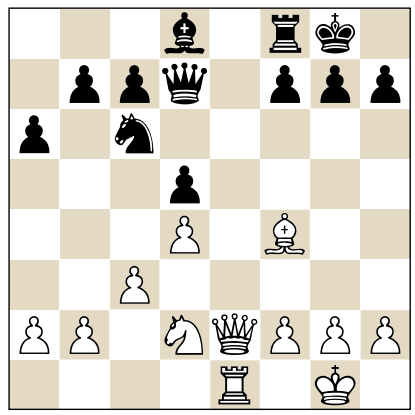
14...♖ae8 15.♖ae1 ♗d8

This symmetrical position looks very close to a draw. The fact that my opponent kept blitzing his moves was not helping my confidence! It was clear that he was still following computer moves.

16.♘d2 16.h3 ♖xe2 17.♕xe2 f6, followed by ...♖f7-e7, and draw.

16...♖xe2 17.♕xe2

At least keeping control of the only open file for the time being.



17...a5 At first I thought 17...♕f5 18.♗g3 ♕c2 19.♘b3 ♕xe2 20.♖xe2 b6 would be easier, but I noticed that Black still had some problems unravelling 21.♘c1.

18.♘b3 b6 19.♘c1

Here (or around here) at last my opponent's preparation ended.

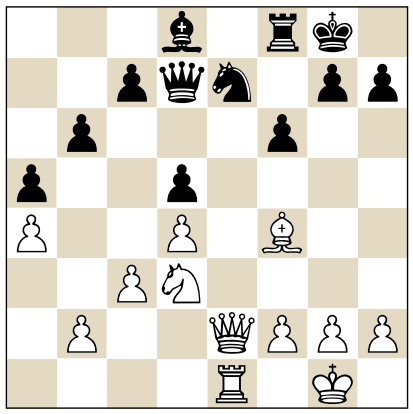
19...f6 20.a4 Fixing his pawns on the dark squares. **20...♘e7** I still don't find anything wrong with 20...♖f7 21.♕b5 ♖e7 22.♖xe7 ♗xe7

ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

Wesley So was impressed by the kindness of the Georgian people and regretted the pain he caused when he defeated local hero Baadur Jobava in Round 4.

23.♗g3 ♔f7. It seems to me that Black holds very well here.

21.♘d3



21...g5!? Interesting but shocking! I didn't consider this move at all, but it's quite in keeping with Fedoseev's aggressive style.

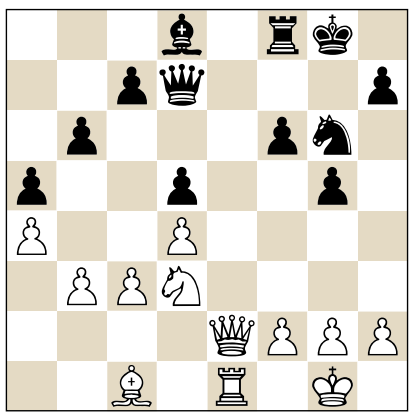
21...♖f7! is the fastest way to a draw (more or less). Black intends ...♘g6/...♖e7, while at the same time threatening to take my a-pawn.

22.♗c1! Preparing f4 or h4. It must be said that long piece retreats like this one are not easy to play.

He must have been expecting 22.♗g3 ♘f5, when he can harass my bishop on g3.

22...♘g6 As 22...♕xa4 is too dangerous, because his king is defenceless now: 23.h4 ♘g6 24.h5 ♘h8 25.♕e6+ ♘f7 26.f4, with a crushing attack.

23.b3 I considered and rejected 23.f4 ♕xa4 24.♕e6+ ♔g7, since the Black queen will cause havoc by entering on c2: 25.♕xd5 ♕c2. I don't think White is better in this variation.

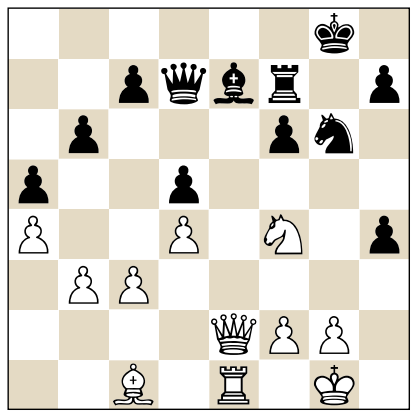


23...♗e7? An unexpected inaccuracy. He wanted to develop his bishop to an active spot (d6) before playing ...♖f7-e7, but there is simply no time for this. I was convinced that he was going to play 23...♖f7!, threatening massive exchanges along the e-file. The position looks equal.

24.h4! Attack! 24.f4 was also possible, but I like my move better.

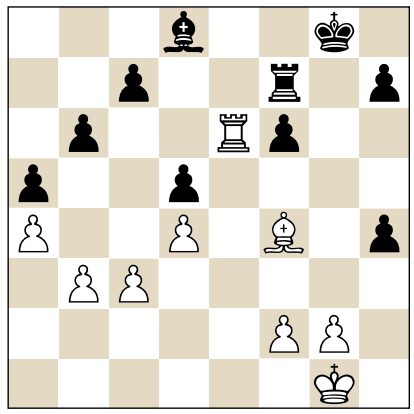
24...gxh4 25.♘f4 ♖f7

25...♘xf4 26.♕xe7 was what I was calculating: 26...♕g4 27.♗xf4 ♕xf4 28.♕d7 ♔h8 29.♖e7, and I'm proud to say I was (correctly) looking at lines all the way here! He does not have perpetual check because my king is hiding on h3!



26.♕e6! 26.♕h5 ♘xf4 27.♗xf4 was another good option, but due to the looming time-trouble threat, I wanted to swap queens!

26...♕xe6 27.♖xe6 ♘xf4 28.♗xf4 ♗d8



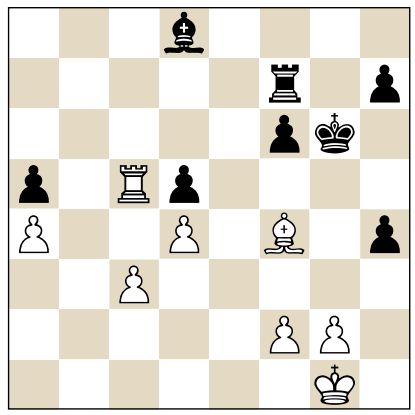
29.b4! The only way to make progress! Simple moves like 29.♔h2 are not enough. In fact, Black does not have any problem after 29...♖d7 30.♔h3 ♔f7 31.♖c6 ♖e7, followed by ...♔e8-d7 or ...♖e6.

29...♔g7 He cannot avoid losing a pawn, because if he makes logical moves like 29...axb4? 30.cxb4 ♖d7 31.a5 bxa5 32.bxa5 ♔f7 33.a6!, then suddenly my a-pawn will queen!

30.bxa5 bxa5 31.♖a6 c6

He cannot afford to give me an outside passed pawn.

32.♖xc6 ♔g6 33.♖c5



33...♖d7 For better or worse, he should have activated his king, 33...♔f5!, and hope for the best in the rook ending: 34.♖xd5+ (34.♗e3 ♔e4 35.♔f1 may be better, but then I have to consider all possible ideas with 35...♔d3) 34...♔xf4 35.♖xd8 ♖c7, and here at least, Black has good drawing chances.

34.f3 Now I prevent him from activating his king.

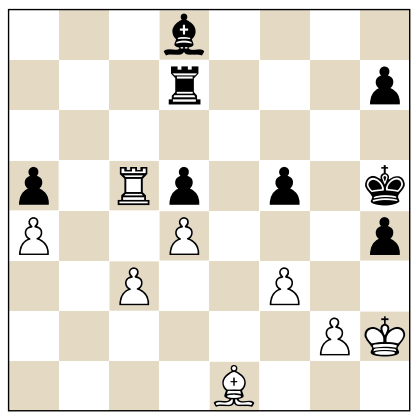
34...♔f5 35.♗d2

35.♗h2 ♔e6 36.♖c8 is another possibility, but I wanted to take my king to h3 right away.

35...♔e6 36.♖c6+ ♔f5 37.♗e1 ♔g5 38.♖c5 f5

38...♗c7 loses to 39.c4.

39.♔h2 39.♗d2+ ♔h5 40.♗f4 looks very good too, but I wanted to activate my king. **39...♔h5**



40.♗f2 Just a random move to make it to move 40 and get my bishop off the e-file.

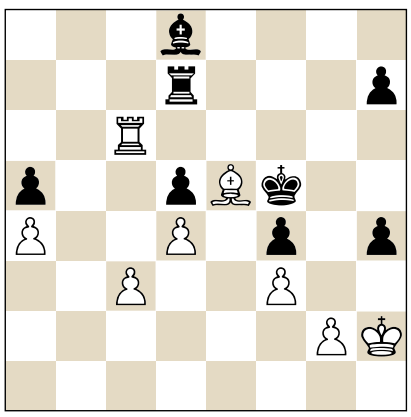
40.♗d2 looks very good too after 40...♗c7+ 41.♔h3 ♖g7. My king looks a little sidelined on h3, but after 42.♖c6! ♖g3+ 43.♔h2 Black has no good way to exploit a discovered check, since his bishop is under attack.

40...♖d6 41.♗e3 ♗b6 42.♖b5 ♗d8 43.♗f4! ♖d7 44.♗e5

Slowly but surely my pieces are getting to their optimal squares.

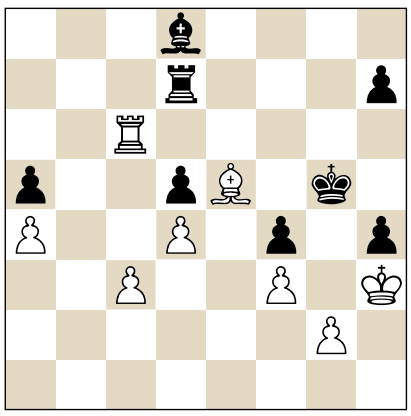
44...♔g5 45.♖c5 f4 46.♖c6 Also winning was 46.♖b5 ♔f5 47.♗b8.

46...♔f5



47.♖a6 47.♖d6! would have saved us many moves, but at this point it was not 100% clear to me yet that the bishop ending was winning.

47...♔g5 48.♔h3 ♔f5 49.♖c6 ♔g5



50.♖e6 I couldn't see a clear way to break through. With this move I'm thinking about ♖e8-f8 ideas, but alas he prevented it.

Later on I learned that the most clear-cut way to proceed was 50.♖c8 ♔f5 51.♖b8 ♔g5 52.♖b5 ♔f5 53.♗b8!, when Black inevitably loses one of his pawns. I am threatening c3-c4 (there is a pin on the 5th rank), and Black's king also has to keep watch over his f-pawn.

ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

In his best effort, Wesley So beat Vladimir Fedoseev to reach the semifinals. 'He had already taken several important scalps and it was very clear he was measuring mine from across the room.'

50.c4? dxc4 51.♖xc4 ♗b6 would be very bad technique. Trading pawns is normally very useful for the defender.

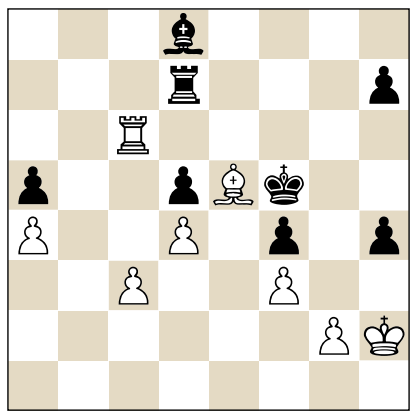
50...♗e7 51.♖c6 ♗d8

51...♖b7 loses to 52.♖c7 ♖b1 53.♔h2 ♗f6 54.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 55.♖c5.

52.♗d6 ♔f5 53.♔h2!

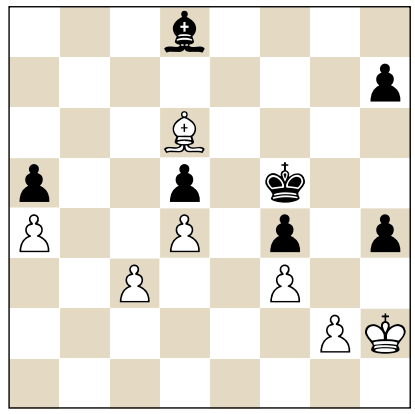
53.♗e5 ♔g5 would be a triple repetition! Fortunately, I was keeping an eye on our score-sheets.

53...♖g7 54.♗e5 ♖d7



55.♖d6! I was afraid we'd suddenly run into a triple repetition, and the bishop ending does look really good.

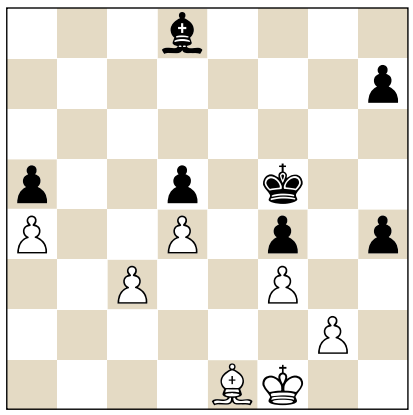
55...♖xd6 56.♗xd6



Black is doomed because he has too many pawns stuck on dark squares. With his a-pawn on a6, the position would have looked like just a draw, but now my winning idea is actually quite simple. Just a matter of bringing my bishop over to e1 (preventing any of his counterplay) and putting my king on d3.

56...♔g5 57.♔g1 ♔f5 58.♔f2 ♔g5 59.♔f1 ♔f5 60.♗a3 ♔e6 61.♔e2 ♔f5 62.♗c1 ♔g5 63.♔f1! Intending to meet ...h3/...♔h4 ideas with the solid ♔g2.

63...♗c7 64.♗d2 ♗d8 65.♗e1 ♔f5



Black can't really do anything, because his bishop has to defend both his a-pawn and his h-pawn.

66.♔e2 ♔e6 67.♔d3 ♔d7 68.c4 ♔c6 I thought he had to keep his king on e6 to defend the e5-square, but it does not really matter.

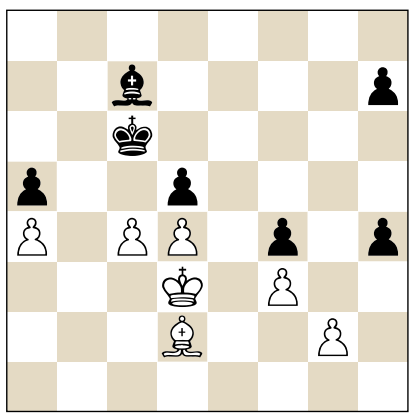
Black is still losing: after 68...♔e6 69.♗c3 ♗b6 (69...♗c7 70.♗d2!, zugzwang!) 70.♗b2 ♗c7 71.♗a3 ♗b6 72.♗f8 ♗c7 73.♗h6 ♗d6 74.♗g5 his pawns are going to fall.

69.♗c3

Black is completely lost because, while he keeps defending his three pawns on the dark squares (a5, f4, h4), I have another idea: to activate my bishop on a3, so that I can always put him in zugzwang as well!

69...♗b6 70.♗b2 ♗d8 71.♗c1 71.♗a3 wins too, but there's no hurry ☺.

71...♗c7 72.♗d2

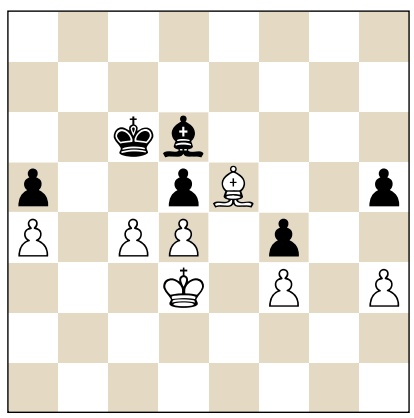


First zugzwang! Black cannot move his bishop or king, so he has to push a pawn.

72...h5 73.♗c3 ♗b6 74.♗b2 ♗c7 74...♗d8 75.♗c1 ♗c7 76.♗d2 would be the second zugzwang!

75.♗a3 ♗d8 76.♗f8 ♗g5 77.♗g7 ♔d6 78.♗e5+ Nope, you cannot go to e6 because of ♗c7 ☺.

78...♔c6 79.♔c3 I can always wait and go back and forth my king to c3 and d3. **79...♗h6 80.♗f6 ♗f8 81.♔d3 h3 82.gxh3 ♗d6** Or 82...♗a3 83.c5 ♔d7 84.♔c2, and wins. **83.♗e5**



And after a few stressful minutes making sure that the king and pawn ending was lost, my opponent resigned.

I salute all the great GMs who left the World Cup before me. They fought well and they fought to the death. It's a painful truth, but no matter how good you are, bad days are written into the contract. This is an extremely difficult kind of tournament, where just one mistake means you are done. The tension is on you day and night. The stress level is mountain high. Even when you win, that same night you are thinking that you will probably lose tomorrow and that maybe you should start packing and looking for your ticket home. There is no time for feelings of pride or invincibility because every day you see truly top-level players making that one fatal misstep.

I heartily congratulate GMs Aronian and Ding for getting to the final and then Levon for winning. They both played fantastic chess, fought extremely hard and totally deserved those last two slots!

■ ■ ■

'Even when you win, that same night you are thinking that you will probably lose tomorrow and that maybe you should start packing.'

Tblisi 2017

7 rounds of knock-out

Round 3	
Carlsen-Bu Xiangzhi	½-1½
Svidler-Onischuk	1½-½
Vachier-Lagrave-Lenderman	2½-1½
Grischuk-Navara	3½-2½
Kramnik-Ivanchuk	½-1½
Giri-Sethuraman	4-2
Aronian-Matlakov	4½-3½
Dubov-Artemiev	1½-½
So-Vallejo Pons	1½-½
Nepomniachtchi-Jobava	1½-2½
Nakamura-Fedoseev	½-1½
Kovalyov-Rodshtein	0-2
Caruana-Najer	1½-2½
Rapport-Li Chao	2½-1½
Kuzubov-Wang Hao	½-1½
Ding Liren-Vidit	2½-1½

Round 4	
Bu Xiangzhi-Svidler	1-3
Vachier-Lagrave-Grischuk	3½-2½
Ivanchuk-Giri	1½-½
Aronian-Dubov	1½-½
So-Jobava	2½-1½
Fedoseev-Rodshtein	3-1
Najer-Rapport	1½-2½
Wang Hao-Ding Liren	½-1½

Round 5 Quarterfinals	
Svidler-Vachier-Lagrave	1½-2½
Ivanchuk-Aronian	½-1½
So-Fedoseev	1½-½
Rapport-Ding Liren	½-1½

Round 6 Semifinals	
Vachier-Lagrave-Aronian	4-5
So-Ding Liren	2½-3½

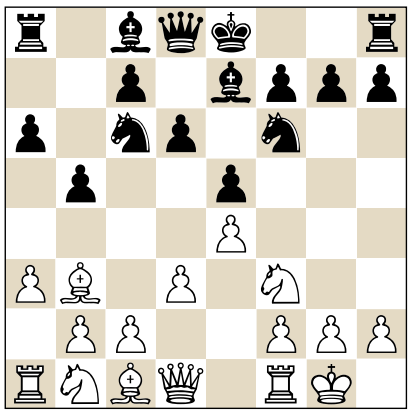
Final	
Aronian-Ding Liren	4-2

The semifinal between Aronian and Vachier-Lagrave was a fierce clash between two players with great faith in their chances and who, no matter what happened on the board, remained outwardly relaxed and continued to radiate self-confidence. Their battle went all the way to the Armageddon game, in which Aronian showed the strongest nerves, as he won with White while MVL had draw odds. But perhaps the climax of their mini-match was the pair of rapid games they played. In the first one, the Frenchman scored a fine win.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

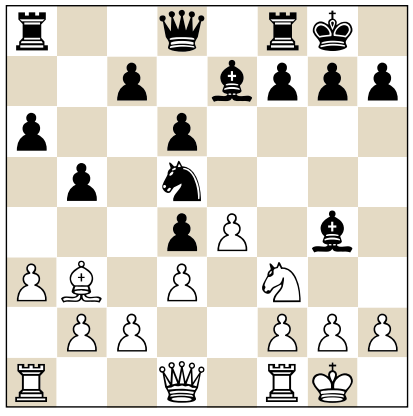
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Levon Aronian
Tbilisi 2017 (6.3)
Ruy Lopez, Closed Variation

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.a3



The same system that was used by Vachier-Lagrave in the classical part of the very same match. MVL and Bacrotov (his second Etienne Bacrot – ed.) have been trying to get something going in this variation, which has been popular for the past few years and got another boost thanks to Karjakin's attempts here against Magnus Carlsen in their World Championship match. Later on, even Vladimir Kramnik used it to get a better position against Alexey Shirov. All in all, one of the most critical lines against the classical Spanish.

8...0-0 9.♘c3 ♗g4 10.♗e3 ♘d4 11.♗xd4 exd4 12.♘d5 ♘xd5!?

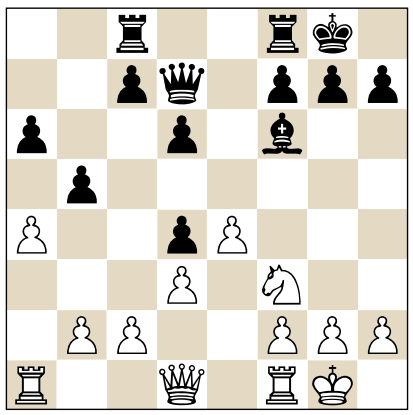


This was a surprise prepared by Aronian for the classical game, in which MVL had expected 9...♘a5 10.♗a2 ♗e6, which by now is one of Black's main attempts to completely neutralize White's initiative. Later on in the tie-break, that system was something Levon resorted to, getting good positions. In hindsight, of course, Levon shouldn't have gone for this rather dubious looking system twice, but in hindsight we all are geniuses.

13.♗xd5 ♖c8 14.♗c6!

Levon had his reasons to go for this system twice, but Bacrotov, who had also been helping MVL during the Candidates, had done his homework well, and the game soon became risk-free for White.

14...♗f6 15.a4 ♗d7 16.♗xd7 ♕xd7



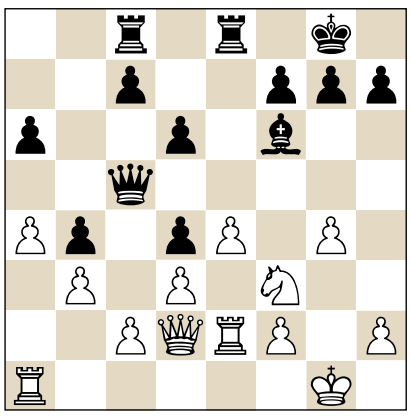
This position may be fine for Black, but in order to prove this, much deeper preparation is needed than what Black showed in this game. The weird idea of ...♕c6-c5 is probably not it.

17.♕d2 ♕c6 18.b3 ♖fe8 19.♖fe1 ♕c5 Though it looks clever, this was probably improvised. Black has no real counterplay and White has a pleasant choice between invading on the queenside with axb5 axb5 ♖a6 and keeping things closed there and pushing on the kingside.

20.g4!? When talking to my friends during this game, I managed to predict this rushed push, which seems reasonably appropriate in this closed position. Most people I know would go g3 ♔g2 and only then think of how to advance things.

20...b4 Closing the queenside. Hard to say whether there was any point in keeping the tension. If that had been the plan, Black should perhaps have tried to push the c-pawn to c5 and eventually to c4. One way or the other, Black is now doomed to play the role of observer in this game. White still needs to find a way to break through, but that is a very pleasant task to occupy oneself with.

21.♖e2



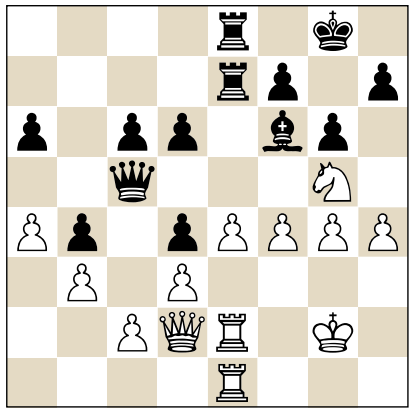
21...c6?!

21...♖e6!, doubling first, was more sensible. One of the defensive set-ups is to go ...h6 and ...♗d8, meeting g5 with ...h5.

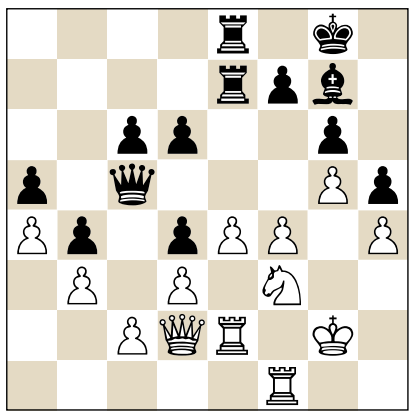
Another, more annoying set-up is to go ...♗e5, introducing the idea of ...♖f6 and ...♖f4. In fact, Black might not be doing too badly here. Maybe g4 was a little too hasty after all.

22.♖ae1 g6

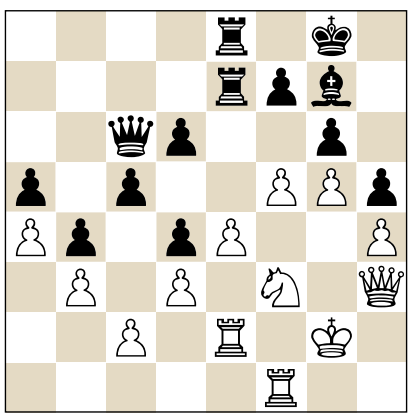
Black goes for a very passive set-up.
23.♔g2 ♖e6 24.h4 ♖ce8 25.♘g5!
Preparing to push one more pawn to the 4th rank. Things look really sad for Black now.
25...♖6e7 26.f4



26...a5?!
This is bad, because Black could already have closed the kingside at this point. But later, too, the pawn would probably prefer to be on a6 once the knight gets to c4.
Stronger was 26...h6! 27.♘f3 h5, getting the same sad position as in the game.
27.♘f3?!
27.♔h2! was a lot better. Black is not even able to close the kingside now: 27...h6 (27...♕b6 28.♘f3! – now that ...h7-h5 has become impossible, White will have a much easier task to break the position open) 28.♘f3 h5 29.♖g2!.
27...h5 28.g5 ♗g7 29.♖f1



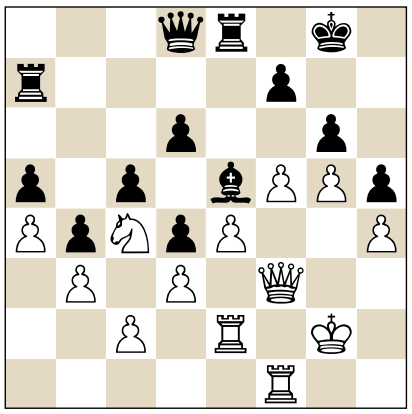
29...♕a7?!
29...d5!? would now force White to push 30.e5 ♕b6 31.♕e1 c5 32.♘d2, and I feel it will only be a matter of time till White regroups his pieces and pushes f5. The queen will land on h3 and White can bring his king all the way to a2.
That said, in a practical game (and in analysis too, I am afraid), it won't be that simple to actually push f5.
30.♕e1 c5 Now ...d5 can always be met by ♘d2!?, when White doesn't even have to push e5 yet.
31.♕g3 ♕d7 32.♕h3?!
32.♘d2 ♕c6 33.f5 is a cleaner way to do what MVL did.
32...♕c6 33.f5?!
The right push, but wrongly timed. Now Black gets a real chance.
33.♘d2!? d5! 34.e5 would lead to the position discussed above. White's prospects are good. But 32.♘d2 would have been better.



33...♖a7?
Black gives up the last line of defence. All he is hoping for now is for White to push f6 and lock the position into a draw. That said, I am sure Black did not really hope for a positive outcome here. Being so dominant, White deserves a breakthrough.
33...d5! is desperate, but that doesn't make it any less good. Surprisingly, this is not only enough to mess things up, but even to equalize: 34.♘d2 (34.f6 ♖e6! 35.fxg7 dxe4 leads to complications. To my taste, Black has taken over the initiative, although some people might prefer an extra piece. In any case, the position is objectively balanced. I will spare you the details) 34...c4! 35.f6 ♖e6 36.fxg7 c3!, and once the e4-pawn falls, Black's play will become unpleasant. The main point is that 37.♘f3? will be met by 37...dxe4 38.♘xd4 ♕d5! 39.♘xe6 exd3+, and Black takes over. 37.♖ef2! was strong, when it is still Black who has to prove equality, but according to my analysis, he will.
34.♘d2 ♖c7 35.♕f3 ♖a7 36.♖fe1 ♕c7 37.♘c4 ♗e5 38.♖f1 ♕d8
Black was unable to keep the bishop on g7 and stop the e5 break at the same time.

ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave played the prominent part that was expected of him. The Frenchman remained confident that he can still qualify for the Candidates in the final leg of the Grand Prix in Mallorca.

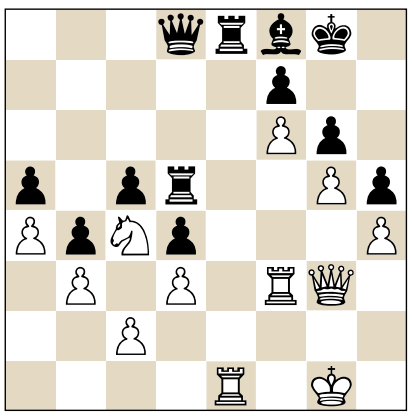


39.♖ef2?! It was already possible to cash out into a winning endgame. 39.fxg6! fxg6 40.♘xe5 dxe5 41.♕f6, and in the ensuing rook ending, the black pawns are going to fall one by one, starting with c5 or a5, once g6 is protected.

39...♗g7 Now it suddenly becomes less easy for White to break through, but before MVL could really doubt his victory in this game, Lev blew himself up on move 43.

40.♕f4 ♖d7 41.♔g1 ♔h7 42.♕g3 ♔g8 43.♖f3 I suppose intending ♕f2, followed by fxg6 fxg6 ♖f7. **43...d5?** The plan starting with ♕f2 was indeed hard to stop, but this only hastens the end.

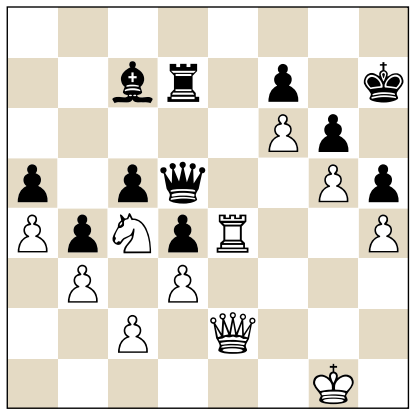
44.exd5 ♖xd5 45.f6 ♗f8 46.♖e1



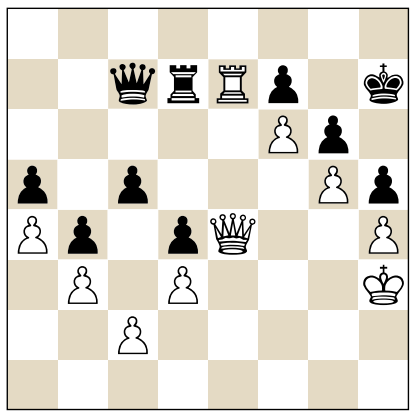
White not only completely dominates (he already did!), but now he also has the open file, which will eventually allow him to penetrate.

46...♖xe1+ 47.♕xe1 ♗d6 48.♕e4 ♗c7 49.♖f2 ♕d7 50.♖e2 ♔h7 51.♕g2 MVL reshuffles his pieces. In this position it is a rather pleasant thing to do.

51...♕f5 52.♖e4 ♖d7 53.♕f1 ♕d5 54.♕f3 ♕b7 55.♔g2 ♕c8 56.♕e2 ♕b7 57.♔g1 ♕d5



58.♘e5!? There were many ways to clinch it, but the exchange of the 'good' knight is the most straightforward one. **58...♗xe5 59.♖xe5 ♕d6 60.♔g2 ♖d8 61.♕e4 ♖d7 62.♖e7 ♕c7 63.♔h3**



63...♕c8 It was possible to stop the instant ♕e6!! knockout with 63...♕d6, but the position is utterly winning in many different ways. In fact, ♕e6 also wins with the king on g2. **64.♕e6!** Black resigned.

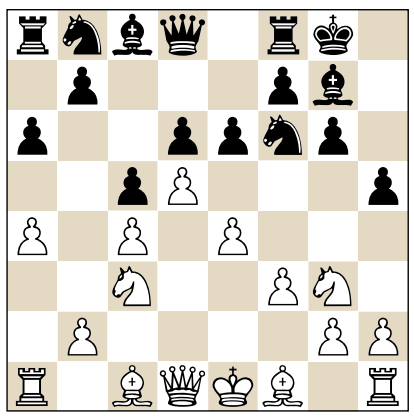
■ ■ ■

That was a heavy blow for the Armenian and he must have felt it that way. But no one noticed, and as if nothing had happened he sat down for the second game, in a must-win situation. As he would put it later: 'I think Max thought that it was just a desperado, sacrificing pieces for fun. But when he realized the attack was really strong, it got him down. I had looked at it, and I can say it was not my best idea in that position, but it worked.' As Aronian had no time to contribute to this article because of his wedding immediately after the World Cup, the notes are by his assistant and friend of many years, Ashot Nadanian.

NOTES BY
Ashot Nadanian

Levon Aronian
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Tbilisi 2017 (6.4)
King's Indian, Sämisch Variation

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 c5 4.d5 d6 5.♘c3 e6 6.e4 ♗g7 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.♘g3 a6 9.a4 h5

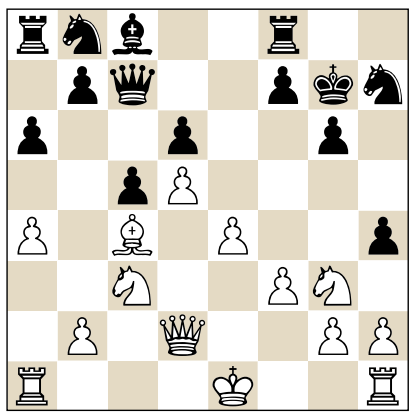


A popular idea in the Sämisch Variation of the King's Indian. The early march of the h-pawn aims to attack the knight on g3 and cause White to clutter his pieces on the kingside.

10.♗g5 ♕c7

Stepping out of the pin. Black wants to play 11...♘h7 in order to again threaten to advance the h-pawn.

11.♕d2 exd5 12.cxd5 ♘h7 13.♗h6 h4 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♗c4!? A new and very interesting idea, offering the knight on g3. Before this game White would automatically play 15.♘ge2, which has a significant disadvantage – blocking the f1-bishop.



15...hxg3 A principled and correct decision. Otherwise White would

have good play 'free of charge'. Although Aronian thinks that 15...♕e7 was safer and more justified from a practical point of view.

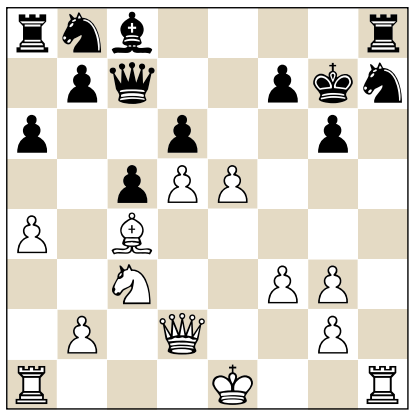
16.hxg3 ♖h8

Somewhere around here, Levon realized that he did not remember his analysis well enough and decided to just play natural moves. White also has compensation for the sacrificed material after other moves: 16...g5 17.♗d3 or 16...f6 17.0-0-0.

17.e5!

Very energetic. If White manages to open up the position for his bishop, his attack will become decisive. With the text-move White also vacates the e4-square for the knight.

After 17.♕h6+ ♔g8 18.e5 ♕e7 19.e6 ♘d7 20.0-0-0 ♘df8 White has insufficient compensation for the piece.

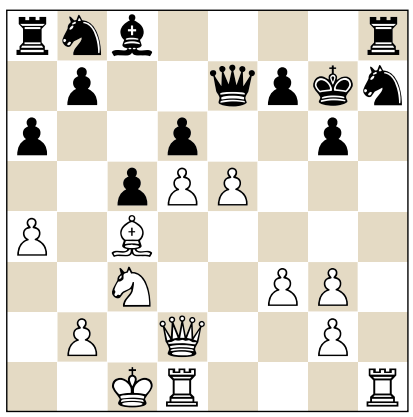


17...♕e7!

Black's queen rushes to the epicentre of events. Other continuations, e.g. 17...♘d7 18.e6 or 17...dxe5 18.d6 ♕d7 19.♕h6+ ♔g8 20.♕xg6+, are bad.

18.0-0-0

The alternative was 18.e6 ♘d7 19.0-0-0 ♘df6 (19...♘df8 20.♘e4) 20.♕h6+ ♔g8 21.g4, with an unclear position.



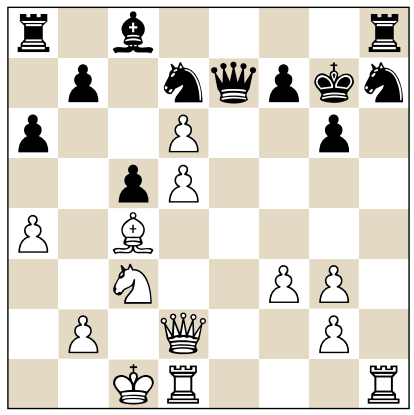
NEW IN CHESS

Despite the high stakes, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Levon Aronian remained courteous and friendly to each other till the very end, which came in the shape of a brutal Armageddon game.

18...♘d7

Here 18...b5!? was more ambitious. But 18...♕xe5?? would have been a fatal blunder: 19.♖de1 ♕d4 20.♕h6+ ♔f6 21.♖h4, and Black can resign.

19.exd6 Black will hold after 19.♕h6+ ♔g8 20.e6 ♘df8.



19...♕xd6

Houdini suggests 19...♕f8!?, a typical computer move. After 20.♘e4 (in case of 20.g4 ♘hf6 Black is OK) 20...♘hf6 21.♕c3 ♕e8 22.♘xf6 ♘xf6 23.g4 ♖xh1 24.♖xh1 ♕xa4 25.g5 ♕a1+ 26.♔d2 ♕xh1 27.♕xf6+ ♔g8 28.♕d8+ ♔h7 29.♕f6 ♕xg2+ 30.♗e2 White gives perpetual check.

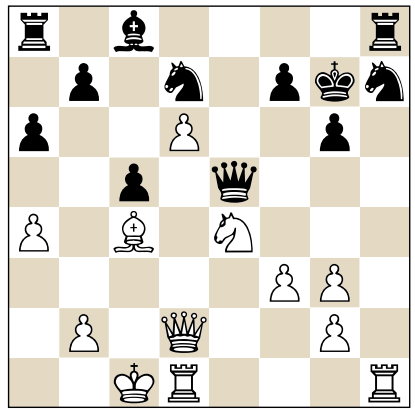
20.♘e4

Now Black has a second weakness besides the h-file: the a1-h8 diagonal.

20...♕e5

Here 20...♕f8?! is less good, because after 21.d6 ♘hf6 22.♕c3 the pin is very dangerous and White threatens to push his g-pawn.

21.d6 Black would hold after 21.♖de1 ♘hf8 22.♖xh8 ♔xh8 23.♘g5 ♕d4 24.♘xf7+ ♔g8.



21...g5? But this is a big mistake. Black should have played 21...♘df8!, and it looks as if White has nothing better than a draw after 22.♕h6+ ♔g8 23.d7 ♗xd7 24.♖xd7 ♘xd7 25.♕xg6+ ♕g7 26.♗xf7+ ♔f8 27.♕d6+ ♔xf7 28.♕xd7+ ♔f8.

22.♖he1

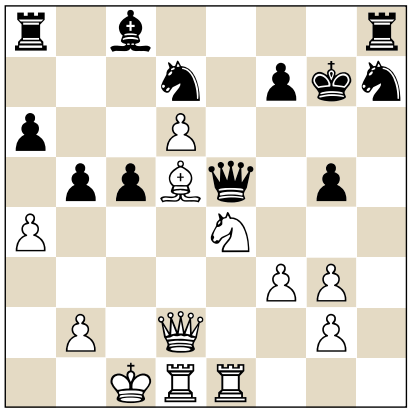
Also advantageous for White would be 22.♗xf7 ♔xf7 23.♖de1 ♔g8 24.♖xh7 ♖xh7 25.♘xg5 ♕f5 26.g4 ♕g6 27.♘xh7 ♕xh7 28.♖e8+ ♘f8.

22...b5

Both 22...♕f5 23.♕c3+ ♕e5 24.♕c2 and 22...♘b6 23.♗xf7 ♔xf7 24.d7 leave Black with a lost position.

23.♗d5

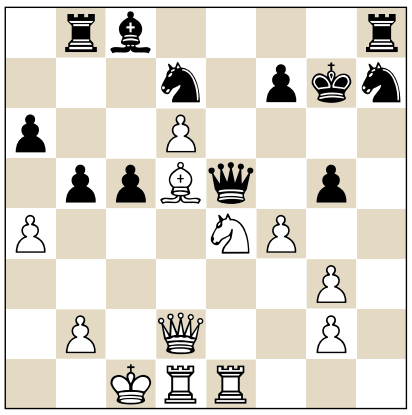
Better than 23.♘c3 ♕d4 24.♕c2 ♕xc4 25.♖e4 ♕xe4 26.♕xe4 ♖b8, and Black should be able to defend.



23...♖b8

Another attempt to stay afloat was 23...♖a7!?, with the idea to use the rook to defend f7. In order to win now, White would have to find a series of accurate and difficult moves: 24.f4 ♕d4 25.♕e2 ♕xa4 26.♕h5 ♘b6 27.♘c3 ♕a5 (no better is 27...♕a1+ 28.♔c2 ♕a5 29.fxg5 ♗f5+ 30.♗e4) 28.♗a2! ♗g4 29.♕xg4 b4 30.♘e4 ♕xa2 31.♘xg5, and White wins.

24.f4



24...♕d4?

The famous American grandmaster Robert Byrne once noted that in order to lose a game, it is usually necessary to make two mistakes: the first one that puts you in a quandary, and the second, fatal one that deprives you of the chance to get out of trouble. If we apply this observation to the current game, we can state that 21...g5? put Black in a difficult position and 24...♕d4? was the fatal mistake. Black had to play 24...♕f5, when after 25.♕c3+ ♘df6 26.d7 b4 27.dxc8♕ ♖bxc8 28.♕c4 White is clearly better.

25.♕e2 25.♕c2 also wins.

25...♕b4 25...♕xa4 also loses to 26.♕h5. **26.♕h5** Black resigned.

It is symbolic that the last decisive move in this game was made possible by the serious weakening of the black position with 21...g5?. A nice Tal-like attack by Levon!

■ ■ ■

Having reached the final, both Aronian and Ding Liren had achieved their main goal, the first reason they had come to Tbilisi: qualifying for the Candidates tournament in Berlin in March 2018. Now they were to play for a nice bonus, the 120,000 dollar first prize, or 80,000 for the runner-up, with 20% FIDE tax to be deducted from both amounts. Remarkably, Ding Liren had not lost a single game so far, but now, after the four 'regular' games of the final had all ended in draws, he lost the two rapid tie-break games. He could have complained about the chances he missed in the second game, but he preferred to look back in a realistic manner. He remembered his game against Vidit Gujrathi in Round 3, in which the Indian had missed a direct win, and concluded that his luck had run out. 'If the tournament had ended after the semifinals, I would have been very happy. It would have been a perfect tournament for me. But today I lost two games. I should have played better, especially in the second game, when I played too fast at the critical moment, perhaps still influenced by the loss in the first game.

'To be honest, after the semifinal I was a little bit exhausted. Because I qualified for the Candidates, my colleagues, my friends and my coach all congratulated me, and I slowed down and relaxed a bit. Perhaps that was why I did not perform that well in the final. But losing the final is totally acceptable for me, especially because he played much better throughout the match.'

At the end, only his coach Xu Jun was still in Tbilisi, after his good friend Wei Yi, with whom he had even shared a room, had left after Round 4. And he missed the food from the Chinese restaurant at the Hualing Hotel. For the players the hotel served an international buffet, but every time he had played an important game he would go to the Chinese restaurant on the second floor to treat himself. He was not complaining, though, because he generally prefers to prepare on his own anyway: 'I believe in my preparation and I think you do not forget your preparation so easily if you do it yourself.'

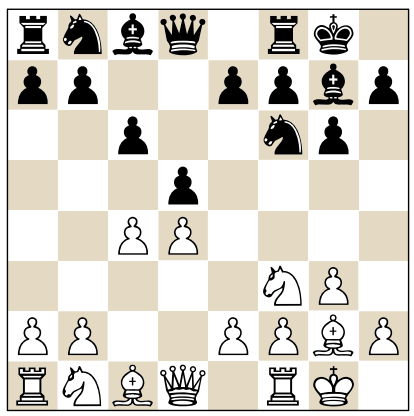
About his best game in Tbilisi he had no doubts: 'The rapid game that I won against Wesley So. That was the most important one and I played aggressively, without any big mistakes.'

NOTES BY
Ding Liren

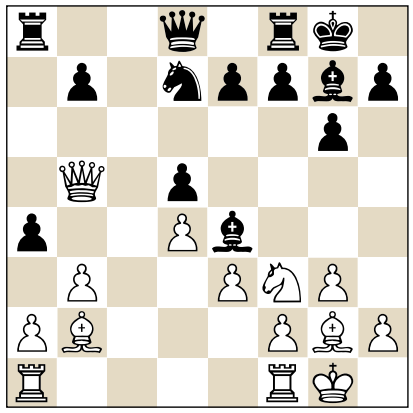
Wesley So
Ding Liren
Tbilisi 2017 (6.5)
Grünfeld Indian, Fianchetto Variation

This was the third rapid game of the tie-breaks. I got a very large advantage in the first one with the black pieces, but I spoiled it. After the game I realized I could have won in many ways and felt very upset. In the second game I was surprised in the opening, which got me in a bad mood, and playing White I offered a draw on move 9. That's why we had a long break before this game: about an hour.

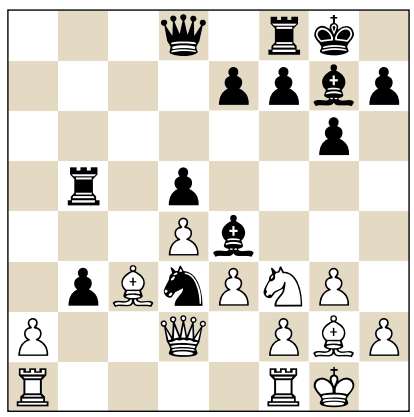
1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.d4 ♘f6 5.c4 c6 6.0-0 0-0



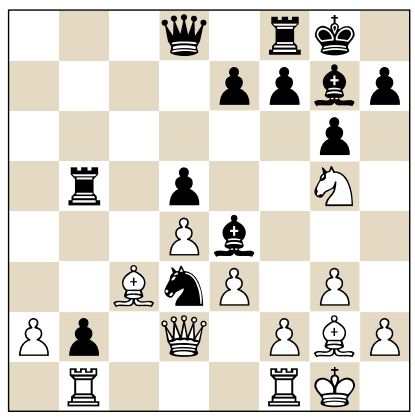
I have played this type of positions many times before, with both colours.
7.♘bd2 This was new to me, but I played a normal idea to challenge his queenside.
7...a5 8.b3 a4 All played 'by hand', within less than 10 seconds.
9.♗b2 ♗f5 10.e3 ♘bd7 11.♕e2
Up to here we both blitzed out our moves.
11...♘e4 A natural move to exchange some pieces.
12.♘xe4 ♗xe4 13.cxd5
Using the fact that I haven't played ...e6 yet.
In case of 13.♖fd1 Black goes 13...e6 14.♗f1 ♗xf3 (or even 14...g5).
13...cxd5 14.♕b5



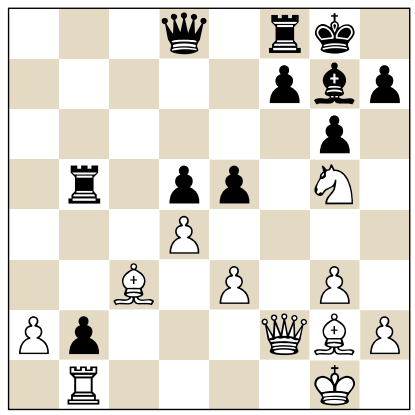
An annoying move, attacking the pawn on b7. I couldn't find a proper way to defend it, but when I saw the possibility of 14...♖a5 I got excited.
14...♖a5 15.♕xb7
After some thought he accepted the pawn sacrifice.
15...♘c5 16.♕b4 A solid move. After 16.dxc5 ♗xb2 17.b4 ♖a8, 18.♘d4! is a good move (I had only looked at 18.♖ad1 ♖b8 and I regain the pawn on b4), but Black can still keep the balance with 18...♖b8 19.♕a6 ♗xd4 20.exd4 ♖xb4 21.♖fd1 e6.
16...♘d3 17.♕d2 ♖b5
Trying to keep my options open. This is slightly inaccurate, but it is this move that makes the game interesting.
Objectively better was taking on b3 first: 17...axb3 18.axb3 ♖b5 19.♗a3 (19.♖a3 ♕b6) 19...♖xb3, and this should be equal.
18.♗c3 axb3



19.♘g5
A good move. He doesn't take the pawn, as I expected, but immediately tries to exploit the vulnerable position of my knight on d3.
Besides the text-move, he also had another possibility: 19.a4. I didn't consider this move during the game, but after analysing it I concluded that it is better for White: 19...♖b7 20.♘g5 ♗f5 21.e4 (if 21.g4 ♗xg4 22.♕xd3 e5, and the knight on g5 is hanging) 21...dxe4 22.♗xe4. Now my knight is in trouble and Black has to find an amazing idea: 22...b2 23.♖ab1 ♖b3! (it's too hard to find this during the game, when you have 10 minutes and 10 seconds per move) 24.♗xf5 gxf5 25.♕xd3 ♕c8, and Black is fine.
19...b2 20.♖ab1



20...♘xf2 Fortunately I had this resource.
21.♕xf2 He can also take the other way: 21.♔xf2 ♗xb1 22.♖xb1 e6 23.♘f3 ♕a8 24.♖xb2 ♖xb2 25.♕xb2 ♖b8 26.♕c2 ♕a3, and he cannot protect the pawn on a2, and the position is close to equal.
21...♗xb1 22.♖xb1 e5



ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

By energetically conducting the third tiebreak game against Wesley So, Ding Liren proceeded to the final to become the first ever Chinese player to qualify for the Candidates tournament.

This and my previous three moves I played without thinking, putting him under pressure, also because I was ahead on the clock.

23.♘h3

Accompanied by a draw offer, which I immediately declined, since I had seen my next two moves.

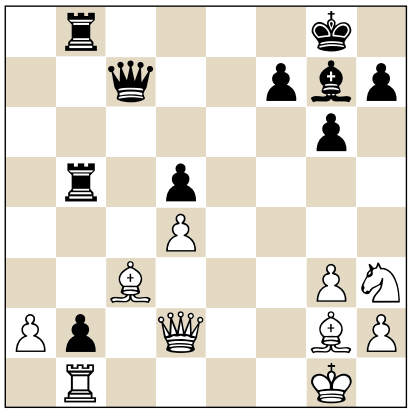
I thought he would play the more natural 23.♘f3 e4 24.♗f1! ♖b7 25.♘e1 ♕a8 26.♖xb2 ♖fb8! 27.♖xb7 ♖xb7 28.♘g2, and he cannot keep the pawn after 28...♖a7, and Black should be better in the long run.

23...exd4 24.exd4 ♕c7 25.♕d2

Not, of course, 25.♖xb2?, since this loses the queen: 25...♕xc3 26.♖xb5 ♗xd4.

25...♖fb8 This allows him a good move, which fortunately he missed.

The best move was 25...♕c4, when after 26.♗f1 ♕xa2 27.♖xb2 ♖xb2 28.♕xb2 ♕xb2 29.♗xb2 ♖b8 the pawn on d4 will fall and Black is slightly better.



26.♘f4

It looks so natural to play the knight here, but it's not the best move. Better was first 26.♗f1, attacking the rook while at the same time protecting the important c4-square. Now the best move is 26...♖c5 27.dxc5 ♕xc5+ 28.♔g2 ♗xc3 29.♕c2 ♕a3 30.♗d3 ♗d4 31.♘f4 ♕xa2 32.♕e2 ♕a8, when I have three pawns for the bishop, but his position is very solid.

26...♕c4 27.♗xd5 ♖xd5 28.♘xd5 ♕xd5 29.♖xb2

Here I didn't know if I was better or not, but after my next move I didn't see any danger for me, as my pieces are so well placed.

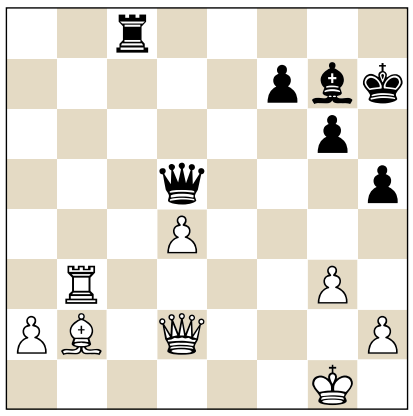
29...♖c8 From here on in, he started losing his grip on the position.

30.♖b3 He should protect his king and play 30.♕d3 h5 (I cannot play 30...♖xc3 because of the intermediate 31.♖b8+) 31.♖f2, and his king is much safer than in the game.

30...h5 31.♗b2 ♔h7

Played without much thought, just like the previous move.

31...h4 32.gxh4 ♕f5 was also fine, but there was no need to calculate such concrete lines.



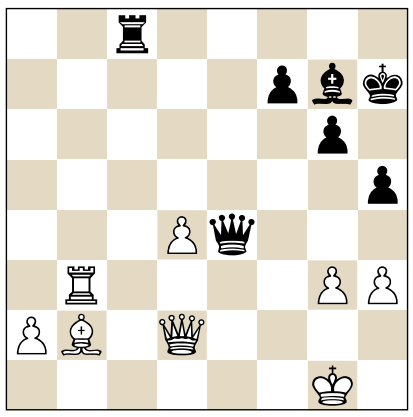
32.h3

Here I realized that he was very nervous about his position. He should have brought his pieces closer to the king: 32.♕f2 ♕e4 33.♖e3 ♕b1+ 34.♔g2 ♕xa2 (34...♖c2 doesn't work because of 35.♖e2) 35.♖e2, with good drawing chances.

32...♕e4

Bringing the queen into the attack.

But maybe 32...♕f5 was better, attacking the pawn on h3 and preparing ...♖c2: 33.♖c3 ♖d8, and the pawn on h3 will fall.



33.♕d3??

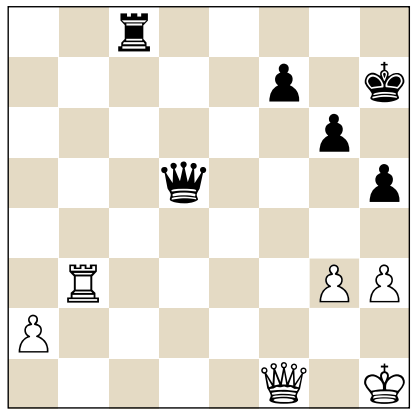
This is a blunder. He should have played 33.♖e3 ♕b1+ 34.♖e1 ♕xa2 35.♕f2, and still it's very hard for Black to win.

33...♕e1+

This move is OK, but I had a good chance to finish the game right away, which I missed: 33...♗xd4+! 34.♗xd4 (34.♕xd4 ♖c1+) 34...♖c1+ 35.♔f2 ♖c2+ 36.♕xc2 ♕xc2+, and this should be winning.

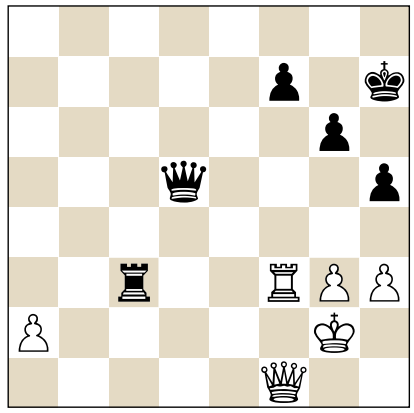
34.♕f1 The only move. 34.♔g2 runs into 34...♖e8.

34...♕d2 35.♕f2 ♕d1+ 36.♕f1 ♗xd4+ 37.♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 38.♔h1 ♕d5+ I had calculated up to here when I played 33...♕e1+ and I believed I had some chances to win.



39.♖f3 Another bad move, which makes my task much easier. He should have played 39.♔g1 ♖c2 40.♖e3 ♕xa2, although it turns out that this is also winning for Black: 41.h4 (41.♖f3 ♕a7+) 41...♖b2 42.♖e1 ♕a7+ 43.♔h1 ♕b7+ 44.♔g1 ♕b6+ 45.♔h1 ♕c6+ 46.♔g1 ♕c5+ 47.♔h1 ♕d5+ 48.♔g1 ♕d4+ 49.♔h1 ♖f2, winning.

39...♖c3 40.♔g2

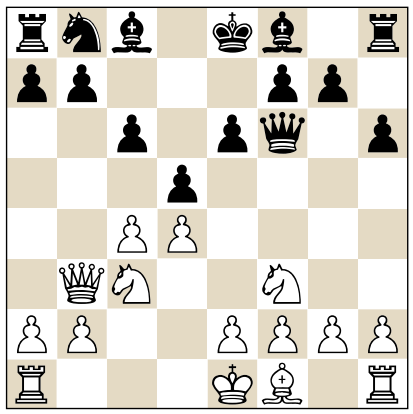


40...♕c6 Maybe he had missed this move. Now I can win his queen. But I want to keep things simple, making sure that I keep my f7-pawn.

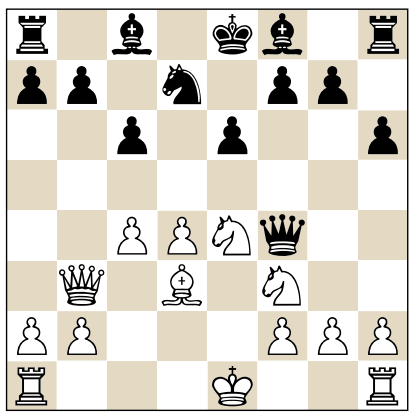
NOTES BY
Ashot Nadanian

Levon Aronian
Ding Liren
Tbilisi 2017 (7.5)
Slav Defence, Moscow Variation

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.d4 c6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6 ♕xf6
The Moscow Variation is an all-time popular choice in the Slav Defence. White leaves his opponent with the bishop pair, but in return gets an advantage in development and control of the e4-square.
7.♕b3

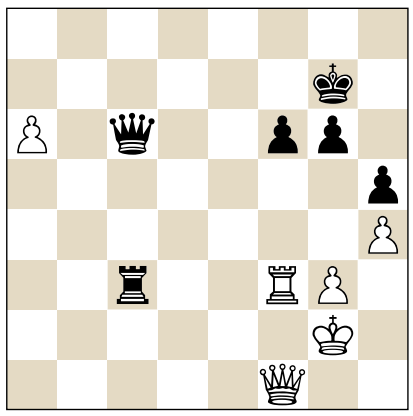


This is a move Alexander Alekhine, Levon's favourite chess player, liked to play. While preventing the black bishop's check on b4, White prepares to push e4. **7...♘d7 8.e4 dxe4 9.♘xe4 ♕f4 10.♗d3**

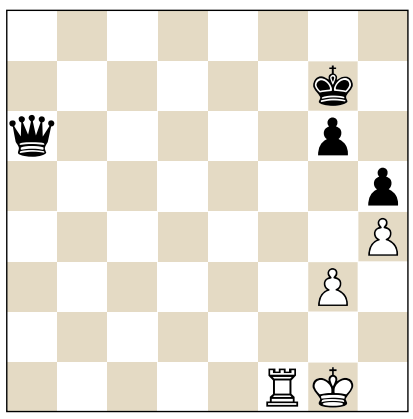


10...e5 To avoid getting into trouble, Black must not play passively. For example 10...♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖fe1 (12.♗c2!? is also very promising, as played by Levon in his brilliant game against Leko at the 2014 Tromsø Olympiad) 12...♖d8 13.♖ad1 ♕c7

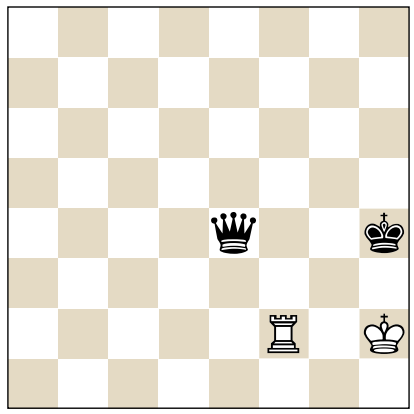
41.h4 ♔g8 41...f5 would be bad, since it would block the queen's access to h3 if it goes to c8 after ...♖c2+.
42.a4 f6 43.a5 ♔g7 But here I realized that after 43...♖c2+ 44.♔g1 ♖c1 45.♖xf6 the pawn still falls.
44.a6



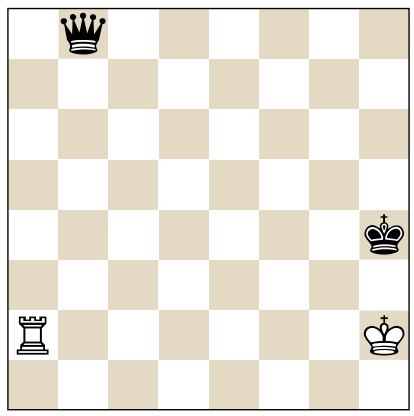
44...♖c2+ Another way to win was 44...g5, but it looked scary. And I didn't have much time. So I finally decided to give up the f-pawn, because I saw that the position after winning the queen was winning anyway.
45.♔g1 ♖c1 46.♖xf6 ♖xf1+ 47.♖xf1 ♕xa6



48.♔g2 More stubborn was 48.♖f4 ♕e2 49.♔h1 g5 50.hxg5 h4 51.♖xh4 (51.gxh4 ♔g6 and the king will go to h5) 51...♕f2 (now the pawn will fall and there is no stalemate) 52.g6 ♕xg3 53.♖h7+ ♔f6 54.♖f7+ ♔e6, winning.
48...♕e2+ 49.♖f2 ♕e4+ 50.♔h2 g5 Now it's easy. **51.hxg5 h4** There is no fortress. **52.♖f4 ♕e2+ 53.♔h3 hxg3 54.♔xg3 ♔g6 55.♖f2 ♕e3+ 56.♔g2 ♔xg5 57.♖f3 ♕e2+ 58.♔g3 ♕e1+ 59.♔g2 ♔g4 60.♖f2 ♕e4+ 61.♔h2 ♔h4**



62.♖a2 After 62.♖g2, 62...♕e5+ is the easiest (not 62...♕f4+ 63.♔g1 ♔h3 64.♖e2, and it's no longer easy) 63.♔g1 ♔h3, and wins.
62...♕e5+ 63.♔g1 ♕d4+ 64.♔h2 ♕d6+ 65.♔g1 ♕c5+ 66.♔h2 ♕c7+ 67.♔g1 ♕b6+ 68.♔g2 ♕b7+ 69.♔h2 ♕b8+



Now his rook will fall and in view of 70.♔g2 (or 70.♔h1 ♕b1+) 70...♕g8+ White resigned.
My most important win in this tournament. I was so happy afterwards, having qualified for the Candidates tournament.

■ ■ ■

After the four classical games had all been drawn, Ding Liren could still end the World Cup undefeated – if they got to the Armageddon game and Aronian would have draw odds – and still not win it. That did not happen. Aronian won the first rapid game and kept a cool head in the sharp second game, where he decidedly took over when Ding Liren missed his best chance. Here's that all-important first game, which essentially broke the Chinese player's resistance.

NEW IN CHESS

For the final between Levon Aronian and Ding Liren, the World Cup moved to the Biltmore Hotel in the heart of Tbilisi, where the Guild Hall was the splendid backdrop for the last act.

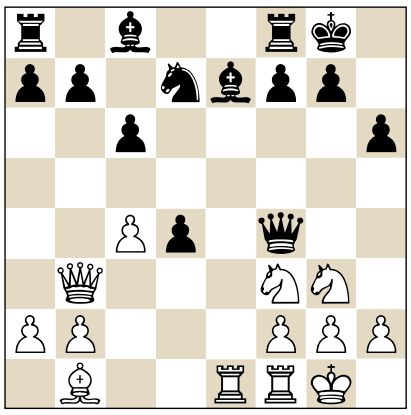
14.♗b1, and White was better in Smyslov-Petrosian, Moscow 1971.

11.0-0 ♗e7

The beginner's move 11...f5? is bad in view of 12.♖ae1 fxe4 13.♖xe4, and Black comes under a fierce attack.

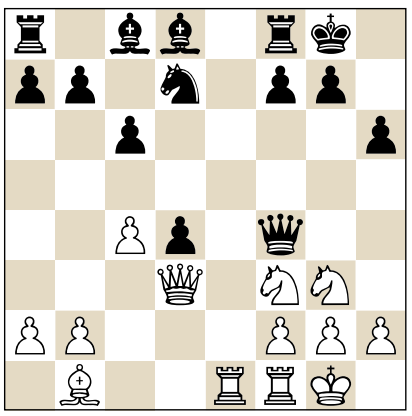
12.♖ae1 exd4 13.♗b1 Levon ignores the d4-pawn and instead 'charges the gun' on the b1-h7 diagonal. After 13.♘xd4 0-0 it's not easy for White to develop an initiative.

13...0-0 14.♘g3 Black is OK after 14.♕d3 g6 15.♕xd4 ♘c5.



14...♗d8 A new move. I think that if this position occurs in one of Ding's games again, he will play 14...♘c5, as in Ivanisevic-Schenk, France 2006.

15.♕d3! 15.♖e4 ♕c7 16.♖xd4 is less ambitious, and Black has a decent position after 16...♖e8.



15...g6 15...♘f6?? would be a blunder in view of 16.♘h5.

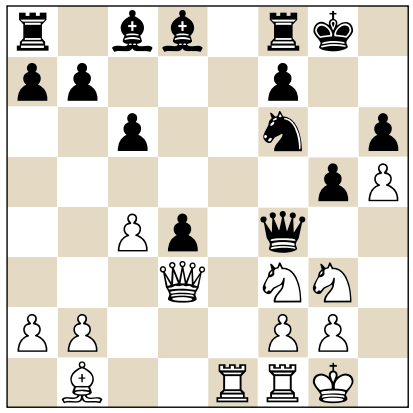
16.h4! Immediately starting to storm the position of Black's king.

16...♘f6 Better was the more active 16...♘c5, when after 17.♕a3 ♗b6 18.h5 ♕f6 the position is approximately equal.

17.h5 g5?! This weakens the black kingside without putting up a fight and surrenders important light squares on the b1-h7 diagonal.

Necessary was 17...♗g4 18.hxg6 ♗xf3 19.gxf3 ♕g5 20.♕f5 fxg6 21.♕xg6+ ♕xg6 22.♗xg6, and White is just slightly better.

It is interesting to note that Vachier-Lagrave made a similar mistake against Levon when he played 21...g5? in their rapid game and then quickly lost.



18.♘e5! The dominating position of all White's pieces gives him a large advantage. After the less strong 18.♘xd4 ♗c7 19.♖e7 ♕d6 20.♖fe1 c5 Black exchanges the queens. By this time, Ding had only half as much time on the clock as Levon: 11 minutes to 22. And he spent another three important minutes on his next move. In rapid chess such a concession in time is often crucial.

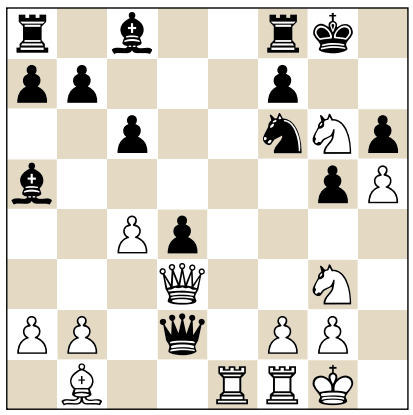
18...♗a5 19.♘g6!

A beautiful move! The knight rushes to e7, from where it will support the g3-knight occupying the f5-square.

To be fair, it should be noted that White had an even stronger option: 19.♖e2! ♗c7 20.♘g6!.

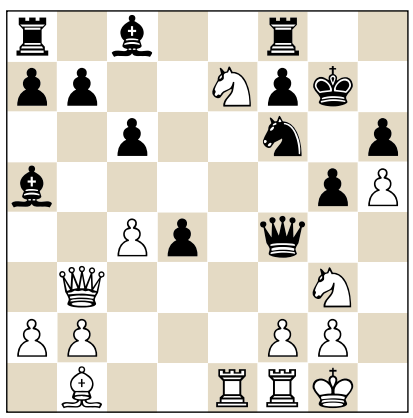
19...♕d2

Here I will make a small digression. Almost from the very beginning of the game there was a noise in the playing hall associated with the repair works in the neighbouring building. Both Levon and Ding appealed to the arbiters to solve the problem, but they were powerless. At this point, after 19...♕d2, the noise became so unbearable that Levon could no longer concentrate on the game and naturally became very irritated. In this difficult situation he found a very strong 'move': having much more time than his opponent – 18 minutes against 8 – he got up while he was to move and went out of the playing hall. After washing his face and pulling himself together – which took about one and a half minutes – he returned to the board, concentrated, and made another two strong moves – this time on the chess board.

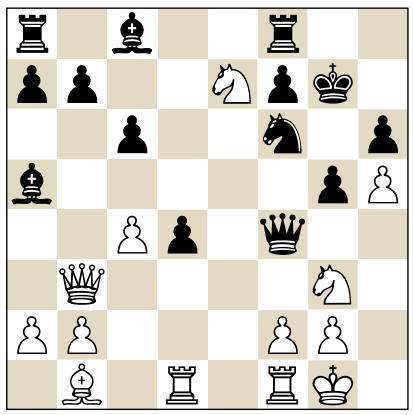


20.♘e7+! ♔g7 If 20...♔h8 then 21.♕f3. **21.♕b3!** Of course, White refuses to swap the queens and continues his strong attack. Suddenly, the black queen that appeared on the d2-square is out of work.

21...♕f4



22.♖d1? Correct was the energetic 22.♘gf5+ ♔h8 (22...♗xf5 23.♘xf5+ ♔h8 24.♖e7) 23.g3 ♕g4 24.♕a3!!, and White wins due to the double threat of 25.♕xa5 and 25.♘g6+.



22...♗b6?

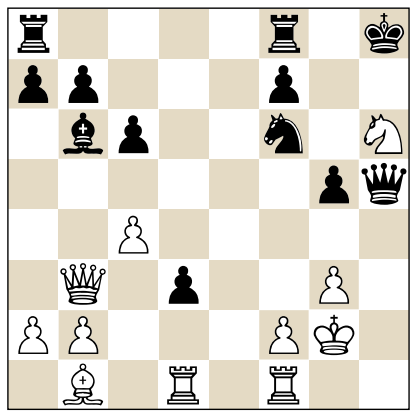
This seems to be the decisive mistake. Black should have played 22...c5 23.♘gf5+ ♗xf5 24.♘xf5+ ♔h8 25.g3 ♕c7 26.♘xh6 g4, when White is better, but far from winning.

23.♘gf5+ ♗xf5 After 23...♔h8 24.♘xc8 ♖axc8 25.g3 the position of the rook on c8 instead of a8 (as in the game) does not help Black.

24.♘xf5+ ♔h8 25.g3 ♕g4 26.♘xh6 ♕xh5 The two alternatives were maybe more tenacious, but White is still winning after 26...♕h3 27.c5 or 26...♕e6 27.♖fe1 ♘e4 28.♖xe4 ♕xh6 29.♖de1.

27.♔g2! Allowing the decisive deployment of the rook, so the game ends immediately.

27...d3



28.♕c3! The last accurate move. After the tempting 28.♖h1?? Black plays 28...♕e2 and suddenly survives.

28...♔g7 29.♘f5+ ♔g6 30.♖h1 Black resigned. A super-important victory!

■ ■ ■

NEW IN CHESS

Friends and teammates. Levon Aronian celebrates his victory with his physical trainer Vartan Geghamyan and his manager Grant Akopian.

Aronian's victory was met by an outburst of Armenian joy, and he soon found himself draped with the national flag. After 26 days it was amazing how fresh and fit he still looked, and it was not for nothing that his physical trainer was beaming with pride. For all those weeks, Aronian had been fully focused on something he wanted really badly. That's what I told him when we sat down for a brief talk before the closing ceremony.

'Ha ha, absolutely. You know, I have some things to prove to myself. When you play in such a tense event, it's kind of a test. I have always been good at winning the most important games and it's good to confirm to yourself that you've still got it. Winning a World Cup generally means that you can withstand the pressure. It can also traumatize you when you play badly at the crucial moments. You kind of feel that you're a choker, and that's one of the worst feelings in the world.'

I had the feeling that this was one of your best orchestrated events ever. You had been thinking about many things, not only your chess. Your physical trainer, the other people around you...

'It was well organized, but you still have to be extremely lucky at some points.

‘I just want to prove that I am worthy of being a hero. I don’t mean a big hero. A small hero from a small country.’

I mean, at one point I lost my cool, against Dubov (in Round 4), as White. I just pushed too much. This could have ended quite badly. I got very nervous. I was kind of lucky that I was able to offer him a draw at this very moment. Tempting him to take the pawn and try to play risk-free. Because I had seen that if he didn’t take the pawn, I would be in huge trouble.’

What exactly was the role of your physical trainer?

‘We did all kinds of work. He’s not just a physical trainer, he is also my friend. We talk a lot and it’s good to have him around. He’s a former sportsman... There were many occasions on which he encouraged me. To be more aggressive, hungrier, especially after my match against Vachier. You get too relaxed. But I think actually that my match against Ding was my best performance of the tournament. I was missing chances, but I was *getting* those chances.’

That’s what struck me. How relaxed you remained, outwardly, even when you missed those chances.

‘Well, I think reminding yourself that you’re not a good player always helps. That motivates me. Reminding myself that people are watching and laughing at me (laughs). That is something that motivates me a lot. It’s normal. People like to see favourites make mistakes. But that’s very motivating at the same time.’

Do you feel that there’s a crowd out there who want to see you fail?

‘Absolutely. And it’s one of those things. It cracks some people and some people thrive. Like Kasparov, this was his thing. He loved it. I remember friends of mine who worked with him telling me that he would ask people, not directly, to come up with some stories about his opponents or somebody disrespecting him. So he would get a flow of aggression in him.’

Which is quite different from what we read so often. Levon Aronian, the hero in Armenia, all those people adoring him... And your view is, I have to teach those people who don’t like me a lesson.

‘I don’t want to teach anybody a lesson. I just want to prove that I am worthy of being a hero, worthy of being a player that my colleagues respect. I don’t mean a big hero. A small hero from a small country (laughs).’

How do you assess the World Cup?

‘Many people say it is a lottery, and it is a lottery in many ways, but everyone who has won it is very worthy. You don’t have someone getting extremely lucky. It’s a tough tournament that gives chances to players, to foolish players like me (laughs), who play terribly through the year and don’t have a chance to qualify by rating, or who play terribly in the FIDE Grand Prix, and gives them a chance to qualify to the Candidates.’

There are 128 players, which sounds like a lot, but the only ones you should care about are the ones you will meet.

‘You approach it one opponent at a time. I didn’t really prepare until when I knew who I was playing. Because it’s just hyping yourself up if you say, I will face Karjakin in the third round or something. Because maybe you won’t. I think it’s kind of enjoyable, because you get to see lots of your colleagues fail (laughs his typical laugh). It’s a great joy when you survive and others die.’

You look very fit. Have you ever been in better shape?

‘I just started. I have bigger plans with my physical shape. I don’t have to change anything when it comes to my chess. As a chess player I am quite accomplished, but there are many fields where I still have to work a lot. The excitement that I get when I can give a check, as my friend Gelfand tells me. He always recognizes those moments when I get excited. Some games here I played very well, like my second game against Ivanchuk. I am kind of proud of that game because I managed to keep my cool.’

Three days from now you’ll have your wedding. Did it put extra pressure on you, because obviously this is a dream scenario?

‘It was very motivating. When you think about it, it is a very difficult thing to achieve, so achieving it by itself is quite a great feat and the best present for myself and Arianne.’

Is the knock-out format also acceptable for the World Championship?

‘I always felt that the world title should be decided in a traditional match. I always thought that chess is the closest sport to boxing. It’s very much like boxing. You throw punches. A match can be pretty boring at times, but then the excitement is about the question of whether the World Champion can withstand the pressure. I am a bit of a traditionalist; the chess title has to be decided in a match. And the good thing is that unlike boxing we have good rest periods between games. We have the perfect boxing arrangement.’

But first the Candidates tournament.

‘OK, I’ve done it, been unsuccessful. This time I know what I want to do. And we’ll see if it works.’

You are confident.

‘Yeah, I am always confident when I play chess, especially before I lose (laughs).

The inevitable last question: what were you listening to during this World Cup?

‘The usual things. Lots of rap, lots of classical music. Listening to a lot of Lou Reed, actually. *Berlin*, I think that’s such a brilliant album.’

Was that in any way connected with the fact that the Candidates tournament will be in Berlin?

‘(Laughs) I didn’t think about it, but strangely enough maybe it was. After all, the lyrics of the title song “Berlin” end with “It was very nice, oh honey it was paradise”. I hope.’ ■

NEW FRITZ-TRAINER DVDs

Unleash your inner Tal or Shirov with the Botvinnik variation and the help of Erwin l'Ami. Make Simon Williams' Chigorin Defence your surprise weapon against 1.d4. Or learn how to realize an advantage from technique expert Sergei Tiviakov.

SIMON WILLIAMS: THE TACTICAL CHIGORIN

Opening with the Chigorin shows your intention to play for a win right from the outset. After 1.d4 d5 2.c4 Nc6 Black's pieces fly into the game putting pressure on White's position from a very early stage. This opening is ideal for the type of player who strives for an unconventional yet attacking game right from the start. This DVD will take you through all the things you need to know in order to play this opening in a fun and exciting way. Simon Williams describes all the main concepts that you will need to know; so even if you forget the actual moves you will have the right reasoning already imprinted in your mind. There is lots of fun to be had with this DVD, and you will also be a stronger player after watching it.

29,90 €

ERWIN L'AMI: THE BEASTY BOTVINNIK VARIATION IN THE SEMI-SLAV!

Ever wanted to release your inner Tal or Shirov? This is your chance! On this DVD you will be taken on a journey through what is arguably the sharpest opening line known to man: the Botvinnik Variation! Ever since its birth, in the late 30's of the previous century, the Botvinnik Variation has fascinated generations of dynamic players. To date, the opening is very much alive and is considered the sharpest and most principled way to meet 5.Bg5 in the Semi-Slav.

29,90 €

YANNICK PELLETIER: THE HEDGEHOG - A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM AGAINST 1.C4 AND 1.NF3

The Hedgehog is a wily opening system characterized by a very particular pawn structure. At first glance, Black's setup might appear somewhat passive, but looks can be deceiving! Black is always waiting for a chance to take the initiative and launch a counterattack. Yannick Pelletier provides you with a complete Hedgehog repertoire against the English and the Reti. The Swiss grandmaster explains a number of theoretical variations with illustrative games. Of course, the devil is in the detail and you need to practice too - the interactive feedback section with tailored questions from the author is just the ticket. Yannick Pelletier gives you feedback on your moves and offers hints.

29,90 €

CHRISTIAN BAUER: STRIKE FIRST WITH THE SCANDINAVIAN

The Scandinavian is a rarely employed opening at the highest level and guides your opponent on much less familiar terrain than for example the Sicilian, French or any 1.e4 e5 system. This rareness leads to a slow evolution of theory. After 1.e4 d5 Black fights for the initiative from move one on without any precedent manoeuvring. The Scandinavian is a reasonable and underestimated opening. It enables Black to alternate between a wild or a more restrained game, having attained a solid position and excellent control over the white squares. Don't hesitate long and make the Scandinavian your opening weapon against 1.e4!

29,90 €

SERGEI TIVAKOV: REALIZING AN ADVANTAGE

It's a problem every player encounters when he stands better in a game: how to convert his plus into a full point? In this DVD the author answers this difficult question of chess strategy, considering both the psychological aspects of the realisation of an advantage and the technical methods. Several issues are taken into account and carefully explained: selecting the correct plan, the importance of the centre and handling a space advantage domination, the principle of two weaknesses, changing the pawn structure, etc. Special attention is paid to the problem of piece exchanges. Recommended for players of all levels and ages.

29,90 €

ADRIAN MIKHALCHISHIN: PIECES, PAWNS AND SQUARES

It is known that pieces are more difficult to handle than pawns – but sometimes they can help each other, e.g. if it's about conquering a square! But what to do once you have gained control over it? How can the advantage of the new stronghold be exploited? All this and much more is shown on this DVD. More themes: how to create weaknesses, how to conquer and exploit important squares, the powerful helping pawn, piece transfer to strongholds, coordination in the attack.

29,90 €

CHESSBASE ACCOUNT PREMIUM

CHESSBASE ACCOUNT:
Access the world of ChessBase from wherever you are 24/7!

PLAYCHESS
The ultimate chess experience

LIVE DATABASE
Professional research: 8 million games online

MY GAMES CLOUD
Your one-stop cloud storage area

FRITZ ONLINE
Your browser-based chess engine

VIDEOS
Private masterclasses

OPENINGS
Welcome to modern opening preparation

TRAINING
Calculate, sacrifice, mate

ENGINE CLOUD
Top engine on the best hardware

LET'S CHECK
Knowledge is mate: 200 million analyses

CB NEWS
The world-renowned chess news portal

ChessBase GmbH · News: en.chessbase.com · CB Shop: shop.chessbase.com
CHESSBASE DEALER: NEW IN CHESS · P.O. Box 1093 · NL-1810 KB Alkmaar
phone (+31)72 5127137 · fax (+31)72 5158234 · WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM

The main goal is still ahead

Levon Aronian's search for spiritual comfort

Three days after winning the World Cup in Tbilisi, Levon Aronian married Arianne Caoili to cap the week of his life. **MARK GLUKHOVSKY**, chess journalist and executive director of the Russian Chess Federation, was one of the guests at the lavish festivities in Yerevan. An apt moment, he agreed, for a personal profile of a dear friend.

'He was about 15 years old, and he was sitting in my kitchen, half-turned to the board. He was playing blitz with his left hand, and his right hand seemed to be playing some kind of tune. Or was he conducting? He also constantly "made calls", joking with women; they were all planning to come and see him. He got bad positions, but he won all his games.'

Night, the centre of Yerevan, a few days after Levon Aronian won the World Cup in Tbilisi. I've come to the Armenian capital for his wedding and am sitting in a café with Arshak Petrosian, the long-time Armenian team coach. I'm drinking Armenian cognac, Arshak whisky, for some reason. At my request he's recalling how he first became acquainted with 'Leva'. After that meeting they had a short but effective period of work together. Levon, who by that time had already won several junior championships, had started playing professionally. A quote from a recent interview: '... it really inspires you when you see how quickly you progress and move ahead, literally Little Muck in his magic slippers' [referring to the German fairy tale *The Story of Little Muck* by Wilhelm Hauff – ed]. At the same time, in the late nineties, Aronian got into the national team, and they won the European Team Championship for the first time in their history. That's how the phenomenon of the Armenian chess team, which has now lasted for almost two decades, got started.

In the early 2000s, Aronian's family moved to Europe and settled in Berlin. Despite their victory in 1999, Levon wasn't put on the team, and for a while he was even on the German ratings list. But soon his conflict with the Armenian federation died down, and the future president of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, took him under his wing. Aronian returned to the team already with the rights of leader, on top board. Soon after that, two victories in a row in Olympiads followed – in 2006 and 2008.

Among the elite grandmasters, Aronian is the only one for whom team appearances are no less significant than individual ones. One of the best players in the world, he never missed team training sessions, which took place in scenic but remote corners of Armenia. I've talked to Levon quite a bit at events and can testify that the famous 'team atmosphere' of the Armenian team is due not only to their head coach, but also

Newlyweds Arianne Caoili and Levon together with Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan, who acted as the couple's 'godfather', and Armenia's First Lady.

to their top player. Arshak Petrosian and Levon Aronian are the fully-fledged co-authors of the Armenian team's success. 'I can always feel when Leva is winning,' Arshak says. 'When he plays, fighting him is impossible!'

I disagree, and offer examples from the World Cup that just ended, when Levon's chances of getting past his next opponent seemed minimal to me. Arshak smiles and throws up his hands, as if it's not a chess game but a natural disaster, like an earthquake or a tsunami.

Family

For Aronian, the team is an expanded version of his family, in the sense of the backbone around which he builds his life. This isn't just a combination of Jewish (father's) and Armenian (mother's) genes. It's also the poverty of the '90s, which you could only survive collectively. And gratitude to his parents, who did everything possible for his career. The book of memoirs that his mother Seda Sarkisovna brought out for her son's 30th birthday is written both passionately and plainly, with love and bitterness. It's a success story, but not only that, and perhaps not so much about Levon. It's the story of the family's shared success, in which they all divided the ups and downs, without sparing anything. If Levon's future biographer wants to do his work conscientiously, he will have to obtain and carefully study this work.

In the mid-2000s, when Aronian had firmly established himself in the elite, he became not only a famous man, but also quite a wealthy one. And, despite his young age, he took care of his family's needs: he built a house in Berlin in which his parents and his older sister Lilit and her family live. He invited his parents to tournaments – in Nice, Zurich, Monaco and Paris. Later he got a flat in San Sebastian with a phenomenal view of the bay. A couple of years ago, travelling around Spain with my children, I took a look at this flat; and although Levon was in Yerevan preparing for his next tournament at the time, I had a wonderful time with his sister, who creates an amazing atmosphere of kindness and spiritual comfort around her.

Boris Spassky

A beautiful life demands constant effort – Aronian is prepared to defend his financial interests when talking to chess organizers. He has refused to participate in tournaments several times because of an insufficient fee. And each time he turned out to be

right: starting from 2005 his career has been a series of endless successes, and I don't know a chess organizer who wouldn't recognize Aronian's right to an extra fee in the end. On the other hand, Levon is sceptical about the very idea of 'starting fees'; he always plays better in tournaments without fees, but with high prizes. Which isn't surprising: in his career he has won or shared first place in about 20 super-tournaments. Aronian has beaten current and former World Champions more than once if he got the opportunity to meet them at the board.

Aronian replies to the traditional question from chess journalists about his 'great predecessors' in various ways – in this or that order he mentions Alekhine, Tal, Larsen, Fischer, Kasparov and Ivanchuk. (Among the active players he rates Carlsen and Kramnik the highest.) But Spassky is always on the list, obviously occupying a special place in our hero's consciousness. If we think about it, we can find several obvious parallels – their constant thirst for battle, being uncompromising at the board, a love of tactical complications, preparedness for domination, and non-standard thinking. The universality of their style. A sense of humour, and a dislike for the official side of chess (and life in general). Belief in their exceptionalism, in their star. In old photos of Spassky you can see the same smile flickering, ready to burst into a guffaw at any moment, the same fire in his eyes, and the same impudence.

Recently, being in Moscow before a tournament, Levon visited Boris Vasilievich: this meeting was interesting for them both. Like Spassky, Aronian thinks a lot about the psychology of the game, understands his opponents well, and likes to be tricky at the board. And, by the way, they both had some problems in their home countries, and they both returned at a certain point. I think that the example of Spassky, who couldn't get into the Candidates tournaments for a long time, and then won them twice, inspires Levon in his further ascent to the summit.

'Like Spassky, Aronian thinks a lot about the psychology of the game.'

Like Spassky, Aronian proved himself early as one of the most talented players, but didn't have success in tournaments in the official cycle for a long time. They both like to emphasize their laziness in interviews, indirectly resisting their depiction as 'chess labourers'. Indeed, both Spassky and Aronian are sybarites; life continues for them outside the chess board. Levon possibly cultivates this image too much, though. 'Let Aronian tell his grandmother that he doesn't work much!' one strong grandmaster said sincerely and plainly, when we were discussing top-class grandmasters' preparation. And although Aronian often complains about the exorcising of the creative component from modern chess, you wouldn't notice it from his games.

Like the majority of top players, Levon is a risk-taker. He likes Fischer Random chess and has been the champion of this difficult discipline more than once. He also plays blindfold and Bughouse brilliantly – to which I can testify as a person who has played in a pair with him (against Magnus Carlsen and Vugar Gashimov, by the way). Basically, he passionately loves chess in all its forms, and it's no coincidence that his closest chess friend is Boris Gelfand. And although Aronian is always ready to make a wisecrack about any grandmaster, he's in no way snobbish towards amateurs. To this day, I successfully use some of his advice, including that of a physiological nature, in amateur tournaments. (Each time I'm amazed at how many factors influence the result of any chess game.)

Bach and Coltrane

Aronian himself thinks that the main thing outside of chess is spiritual comfort. Everything should be good – in your family, in your relationships, in your country, and in the world. He hates conflicts, and obvious injustice makes him angry. His main source of spiritual comfort is art, in some spheres of which he has expert knowledge. As a child he studied music for a short time and his love of it has stayed with him all his life: a significant portion of his interviews has been dedicated to his thoughts about Bach, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Coltrane; his dream is to learn to play a musical instrument.

He likes to draw parallels between the world of chess and the world of art; once he advised me to watch Truffaut's fantastic film *Day for Night*, and since then I haven't known a better metaphor to explain to a person what the chess world is like. A film ends when its main actors, who have started to hate each other, go off in different directions. But a couple of months later they are drawn into filming again, as chess players are to their next tournament. In cinema, as in chess, there's always a hope that the most interesting part is still ahead. The main thing is not to lose your interest in and taste for the business to which you've devoted yourself.

Besides music, he also knows literature really well, and reads a lot in two languages – Russian and English. His favourite writers are Kafka and Platonov. Those authors are united by a common theme – the individual and his reaction to absurd external circumstances, usually caused by government actions. His favourite poet is Marina Tsvetaeva. Zoshchenko, Gogol and Hermann Hesse may also be added. This list says something about his tragic consciousness and contradicts the image of the

'golden boy' that has been formed in chess literature.

'I tolerate losses more easily than wins!' – we should take this phrase of Levon's seriously. The point is that a defeat stimulates him to work on himself, while a victory weakens him. He is ashamed to play badly, and not only for himself, but for his multitude of fans. Before the appearance of Magnus Carlsen, he was unquestionably the most popular chess player in the world. All Armenians support him, from a taxi driver in Sochi to Charles Aznavour, and that's worth something! Wherever Aronian plays – in Wijk aan Zee, St. Louis, St. Petersburg, Stavanger or Tbilisi, you'll always find his typical big-nosed fans in the playing hall, following the games of their idol with concern and hope (and always ready to unfurl the national flag they have in reserve for any occasion). In large part thanks to Levon, chess remains the national game in Armenia, capable of gathering if not a stadium, then at least a full opera theatre of 3,000 spectators.

The latest evidence of this was the wedding of Levon and Arianne, with a small description of which I want to end this sketch. Even an ordinary wedding is a troublesome event, needed least of all by the young people themselves. Not to mention a Caucasian wedding, celebrated with the active participation of the President of the country in the role of 'godfather' of the young couple. I admit, I accepted my invitation happily, but I was slightly worried for that 'private man', whose friendship I value most of all. My fears turned out to be unfounded: I don't know how, but even at their wedding their sense of proportion and taste didn't let Levon and Arianne down. Thousands of photographs together, handshakes, hugs – and all this literally only days after the 26-day marathon in Tbilisi! And no one felt uncomfortable or lacking in attention. Everyone was united by the feeling of a shared celebration; the President and his wife did their duty modestly and with dignity, and the parents shone with happiness and pride. It's tough to be the national icon, and not always simple, but Levon managed to reduce the inevitable pathos with one facial expression.

... Exactly 12 years ago, Levon Aronian won his first World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk and became one of the obvious contenders for the chess crown. In those years he has achieved successes that would have been enough for several brilliant careers. But his main goal is still ahead of him. Who knows whether he is destined to become World Champion? I think this will depend more on the book in which the fate of every person is written. And for me, the end of this book isn't too important. More importantly, it's fascinating to read... ■

A GRANDMASTER AMONG UNIVERSITIES.

If you're interested in playing chess at an American university, we want to hear from you. The University of Texas at Dallas offers highly competitive scholarships to master-level players. For more information, please contact Program Director Jim Stallings at james.stallings@utdallas.edu at least one year in advance of your intended fall enrollment date.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS
CHESS TEAM

chess.utdallas.edu

UT DALLAS

Your SOS Guide to the World Cup

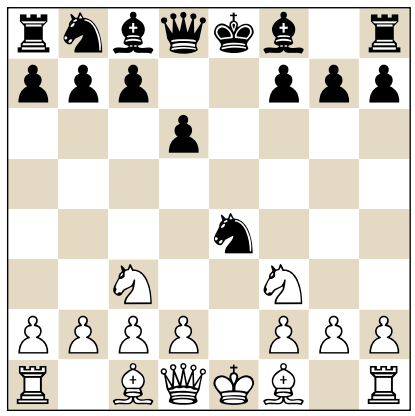
Jeroen Bosch

The pairings for the 2017 World Cup were published by FIDE well in advance. This means that all 128 participants had time enough to think through their opening strategy. Especially the hopeful (those who felt that they might be staying in Tbilisi for a long time) had their work set out for them. What to do: prepare several main lines to last you through the tournament, or do some deep specific preparation in a pet-line of a future opponent? Or store as many opening byways as possible in your database for just the right occasion (a decisive rapid or blitz game) and just the right opponent? In this column we are interested in the byways, of course. Let's make a haphazard SOS journey through the 2017 World Cup!

Not only the home crowd, but many chess fans throughout the world were happy to see Baadur Jobava make it to the final 16. He was eliminated by Wesley So, but meanwhile he had given us 22 games to enjoy. As White he went five times for the Nimzowitsch-Larsen 1.b3, and as Black (surprisingly?) he played five Petroffs. Against the popular 5.♘c3 he not only played the automatic 5...♘xc3 but also 5...♘f6, when none of his opponents could make a dent in his Russian defence. By the way, neither could contributing editor Anish Giri against one of the trainers of the Russian national team...

Anish Giri
Alexander Motylev
Tbilisi rapid 2017 (2.4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3

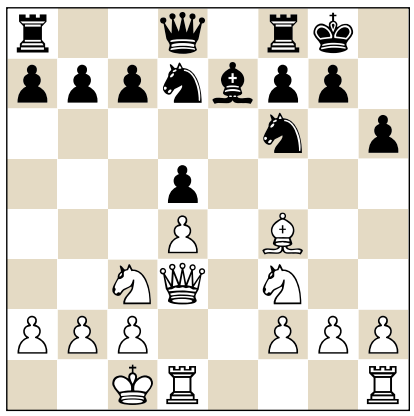


5...♘f6 Played with the idea that the knight on c3 is 'misplaced'. Only in the 5th round did Jobava go for the main line with 5...♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 (some 3,000 games in the database!) 7...0-0 8.♕d2 ♘d7 9.0-0-0 c6 10.♔b1 d5 11.h4, and now the Georgian player adopted the novelty 11...♗c5! 12.♗d3 ♗xe3 13.♕xe3 ♘f6 14.♖de1 ♕b6, with easy equality in So-Jobava, Tbilisi 2017.

6.d4 The position after move 6 can also be reached via the so-called Brooklyn Defence: 1...♘f6 2.e5 ♘g8?! 3.d4 d6 4.exd6 (4.♘f3!) 4...exd6 5.♘f3 ♘f6 and now 6.♘c3. However, 6.c4 is a better move here, and that demonstrates the point of the tempo-loss 5...♘f6 in the game – the white knight is not ideally placed on c3 in front of its own c-pawn.

6...♗e7 7.♗g5
Giri has aggressive intentions. Jobava faced the quiet 7.♗d3 three times in Tbilisi. His first choice was 7...♘c6 8.0-0 0-0 9.a3 ♗g4 10.♗e2 d5 11.h3 ♗f5 12.♗d3 ♗e4!?, with a quick draw in Yu Yangyi-Jobava, Tbilisi 2017. Subsequently he went 7...0-0, which preserves the option of going to d7 with the knight (against Yu Yangyi and Nepomniachtchi).

7...h6!
White's idea is best revealed after 7...0-0 8.♕d2 h6 9.♗f4 ♗f5 10.0-0-0! ♘bd7 11.♗d3 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 d5

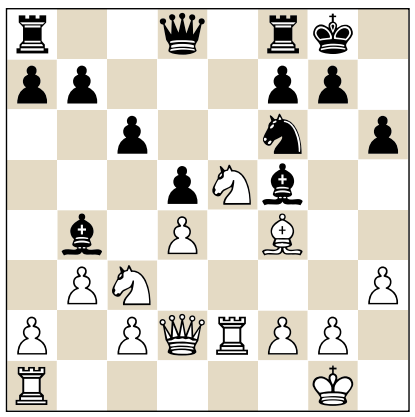


13.g4! c6 14.♖dg1! ♖e8 15.g5 hxg5 16.♘xg5 ♘f8 17.♗e5, with a very strong attack in Bartel-Grabarczyk, Warsaw 2014.

8.♗e3 c6 9.♕d2 ♗e6 Black is cleverly postponing castling so as not to give White any concrete target.

10.♗d3 10.0-0-0 is met by 10...a5 or 10...b5. **10...♘bd7 11.0-0**
White has to swallow his pride and give up on castling queenside. Black

would certainly be pleased after 11.0-0-0 b5.
11...♘b6 12.♖fe1 ♘c4 13.♗xc4 13.♕c1!. **13...♗xc4 14.h3?! 0-0 15.b3 ♗e6 16.♗f4 ♗f5 17.♖e2 d5! 18.♘e5 ♗b4!**

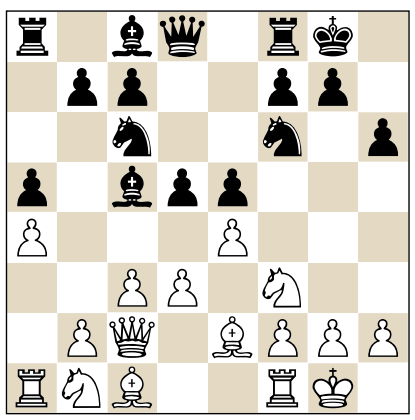


and Black had a very pleasant position, which he managed to turn into a winning one before losing the plot and granting Giri a miracle save.

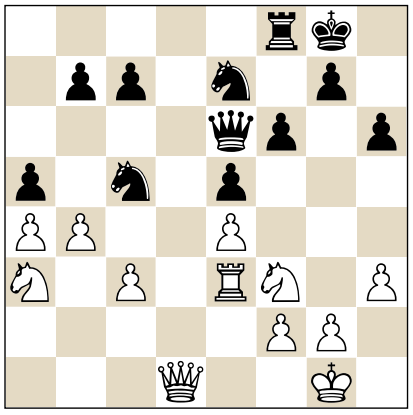
Actually, Jobava had already solved the 'Petroff problem' in his 8th (!) game versus Ivan Salgado – and yes, we're talking blitz now!

Baadur Jobava
Ivan Salgado
Tbilisi blitz 2017 (1.8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d3!
In this crucial blitz game, Jobava decides to play one of his pet lines: the Philidor with reversed colours.
3...♘c6 4.c3 d5 5.♕c2
Jobava's most recent finesse is keeping the queen's knight flexible. He used to play 5.♘bd2, as in the Hanham Variation of the Philidor.
5...a5 6.a4 ♗c5 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0 h6



9.h3 It is worthwhile to compare this with the game Jobava-Matlakov, Minsk 2017: 9.♘a3 ♖e8 10.h3 ♗e6 11.♖e1 ♕d7 12.♗f1 ♖ad8 13.♘b5 ♗b6 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.♖xe3 ♕e7 16.♖ee1 dxe4 17.dxe4 ♖d7 18.♖ad1 ♖ed8 19.♖xd7 ♖xd7 20.♘a3 ♖d8 21.♗b5 ♕c5 22.♕e2 ♘e8 23.♗c4 ♗xc4 24.♘xc4, and it was still equal. For the conclusion of this game (in which Jobava reached a winning position), see Timman's article in New In Chess 2017/5.
9...♗e6 10.♖e1 dxe4 11.dxe4 ♕e7 12.♘a3 ♖ad8 13.♗b5 ♘d7 14.♗e3
Note how Jobava plays exactly the same way as against Matlakov. He is prepared to trade both bishops and a pair of rooks and then to just 'play the position'.
14...♗xe3 15.♖xe3 f6 16.♗c4 ♗xc4 17.♘xc4 ♕e6 18.♘a3 ♘e7 19.♖d1 ♘c5 20.b4 ♖xd1+ 21.♕xd1
Mission accomplished! We have the same material configuration and structure as in the Matlakov game.

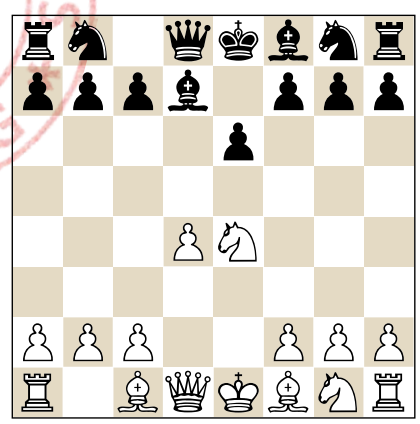


21...axb4 Slightly more accurate was 21...♘a6, since 22.bxa5 is ugly.
22.cxb4 ♘a6 23.b5 ♘c5 24.♕c2 b6 25.a5 And Jobava had a tiny bit of pressure, which he converted into a win.

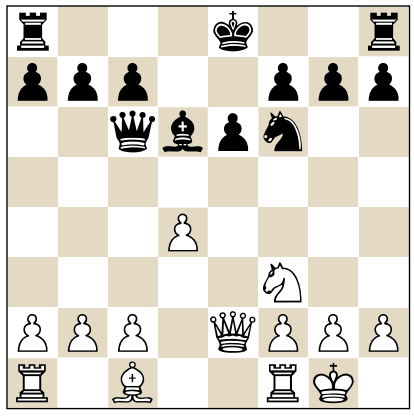
The Petroff wasn't the only defence that Jobava had prepared against 1.e4. In the tie-break against Salgado he twice opted for the equally solid Fort Knox (see New In Chess 2016/6 for an SOS article on this line).

Ivan Salgado
Baadur Jobava
Tbilisi rapid 2017 (1.4)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗d7



5.♘f3 ♗c6 6.♗d3 ♘d7 7.♕e2
In a 10-minute blitz game, Salgado Lopez went for 7.c3 h6 (did he hope that Jobava would repeat 7...♘df6?! 8.♘xf6+ gxf6?! 9.0-0 ♘e7, Areshchenko-Jobava, Chartres 2017 – Black won!; 7...♘gf6 is normal of course) 8.♗f4 ♗e7 9.♕e2 ♘gf6 10.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 11.0-0-0 ♗xf3!? 12.♕xf3 ♗g5 13.♔b1 ♗xf4 14.♕xf4 c6, and Black was only very slightly worse; Salgado-Jobava, Tbilisi 2017.
The main gist of the SOS article mentioned was on the critical 7.0-0 ♘gf6 8.♘g3, and now Jobava's 8...g6!?.
7...♘gf6 8.♘xf6+
Here 8.0-0 ♘xe4 9.♗xe4 ♗xe4 10.♕xe4 c6 was Polgar-Karpov, Madrid 1992 (among numerous other games). This structure is similar to the Scandinavian and the Caro-Kann. Since two pairs of minor pieces have already been exchanged, White's space advantage means very little.
A while ago I received a sympathetic letter from NIC-reader Ron Adams from the UK. He wrote that, following the publication of the SOS-article on the Fort Knox, he had started playing the line, with positive results. Interestingly, he pointed out that in practice he found it most problematic to play against opponents who allowed this type of solid position: for how to play for a win?
8...♘xf6 9.♗b5 ♕d5 10.♗xc6+ ♕xc6
Here, too, White has traded two pairs of minor pieces, and I am sure that Jobava wasn't too worried here.
11.0-0 ♗d6



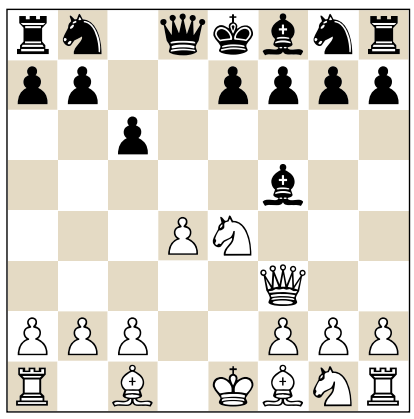
12.c4 More venomous is 12.♗g5: 12...0-0?! 13.♗xf6 gxf6 14.c4 ♖fe8 15.♖ac1 ♗f8 16.♖fd1 ♖ad8 17.♖c3 ♗g7 18.♖e3 ♕d6 19.d5 c6 20.♖dd3! cxd5 21.cxd5 e5 22.♘h4 led to a model victory for White in Timman-Vaganian, Bazna 2008. Stronger was 12...h6, so that after 13.♗xf6 gxf6 14.c4 Black can hide his king on the other side with 14...0-0-0.

12...0-0 13.♖e1 ♖fe8 14.♗g5 ♗e7 15.♘e5 ♕d6 16.♖ad1 ♘d7 17.♕f3 f6! Forcing another trade; the weakening of the structure has no meaning here. **18.♘xd7 ♕xd7 19.♗e3 ♗b4 20.♖f1 c6** With a balanced game that ended in a draw.

The next SOS didn't make a dent in another solid opening.

Etienne Bacrot
Alexandr Fier
Tbilisi 2017 (1.2)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗f5 5.♕f3



I dubbed this 'Tal's early queen move' in New In Chess 2016/3. The main lines I investigated were 5...♗g6 and 5...e6. To Fier's next move I somewhat sternly attached a ?!.

5...♕d5 6.♗d3 ♗xe4 7.♕xe4 I suggested the pawn sac 7.♗xe4 ♕xd4 8.♘e2 to liven things up. Compared to the remainder of the game, that would have been far more exciting!

7...♘f6 8.♕xd5 cxd5 9.♘f3 I claimed 'a little something' here for White on account of his bishop pair, and I guess that still holds, although Black is pretty solid, of course.

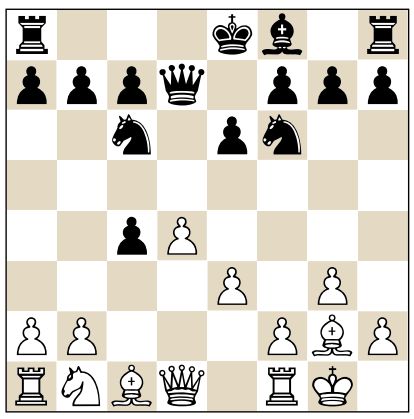
9...♘c6 10.a3 e6 11.b3 ♗e7 12.♗b2 0-0 13.c4 I don't like Bacrot's queenside fianchetto. Fier's next move equalizes.

13...♘a5! And the game was quickly drawn.

In an SOS Catalan, rather than aim for castling queenside, Black recently has been going 9...♖d8.

Maxim Rodshtein
Robert Hovhannisyan
Tbilisi 2017 (1.2)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 dxc4 5.♗g2 ♗d7 6.♘e5 ♗c6 7.♘xc6 ♘xc6 8.0-0 ♕d7 9.e3



9...♖d8!? This was introduced by Bu Xiangzhi in 2016. The more exciting (and risky) 9...0-0-0 was SOS-tigated in New In Chess 2015/4.

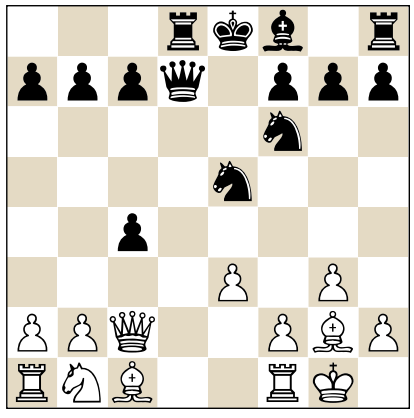
10.♕c2 This is new, although play might transpose to 10.♕e2 e5 11.♕xc4 exd4 12.♕b5 ♖b8! 13.♖d1 a6 14.♕f1 (14.♕c4 ♗d6 15.exd4 0-0, Can-Moiseenko, Khanty-Mansiysk 2017) 14...♗d6 15.exd4 0-0 16.♗h3 ♕d8 17.♘c3 h6 18.♕c4 ♖e8, with a solid position in Tomashevsky-Bu Xiangzhi, Novi Sad 2016.

Bu showed in a rapid game that 10.♕a4 is met by 10...♘b4! 11.♕xd7+ ♖xd7 12.♘a3 c5 13.dxc5 ♗xc5 14.♘xc4 ♘d3, with active play; Bai Jinshi-Bu Xiangzhi, Shenzhen 2016.

10...e5 Black may investigate 10...b5 11.b3 ♘b4 12.♕e2 c5.

11.dxe5 11.♕xc4 exd4 would transpose to 10.♕e2, but Rodshtein has different ideas.

11...♘xe5



12.b3 For the rapid tiebreak Rodshtein's improvement was 12.♘d2 b5 13.a4 a6 14.axb5 axb5 15.b3!, and White opens up the game to exploit his edge in development: 15...♗b4 16.bxc4 0-0 17.cxb5 ♕xb5 18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.♗xe4 ♘d3?! 20.♗a3 c5 21.♖fd1 c4? 22.♖ab1, and White won material, Rodshtein-Hovhannisyan, Tbilisi 2017 (1.3).

12...♗e7 Also interesting is 12...♗b4!? 13.a3 ♗e7. **13.♘d2** Not 13.♗xb7? c6. **13...♕d3?!** Instead, Black should equalize after 13...c3 14.♕xc3 ♘d3 15.♘f3 0-0. **14.♕xd3 ♘xd3 15.♘xc4 b6 16.♗c6+** And White was a little better, although the game ended in a draw.

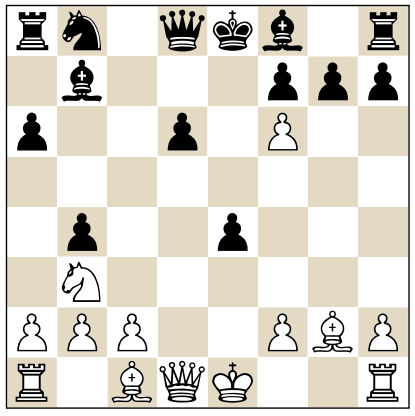
No World Cup without the Najdorf, of course.

Anton Demchenko
Alexander Areshchenko
Tbilisi 2017 (1.2)

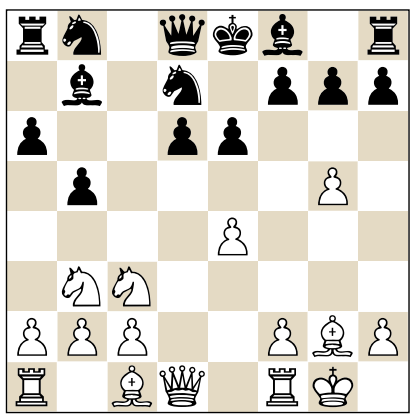
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♘b3 Bartel's prophylactic knight move; see New In Chess 2016/4.

6...e6 7.g4 b5 8.♗g2 ♗b7 9.g5 ♘fd7 9...b4 10.♘d5!? was first played

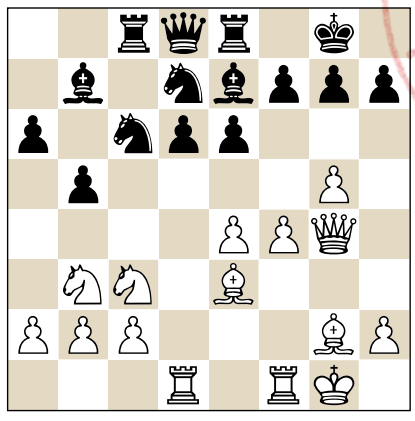
in Bartel-Wojtaszek, Poznan 2016. Recent developments saw 10...exd5 (10...♘xd5?! 11.exd5 e5 12.a3 was the stem game) 11.gxf6 dxe4



and now the lines fork:
– 12.♗e3 gxf6 13.♕h5 ♖g8 14.♗h3 ♘c6 15.0-0-0 ♘e5 16.♕xh7 ♖g7 17.♕h5 ♗c8, J.van Foreest-Van Wely, Amstelveen rapid 2016, and here 18.♘d2 would have given White an edge.
– 12.♕g4 ♕xf6 13.♘a5 ♗d5 14.♕c8+ ♕d8 15.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 16.♗e3 (16.♗f4!?) 16...f5 17.0-0-0 gave White enough for his two-pawn deficit; Mamedov-Iniyan, Abu Dhabi 2017.
– 12.♕g4 gxf6 13.♗e3 h5 14.♕e2 ♘d7 15.0-0-0 ♕c7 16.♗f4 f5 17.♗h3 favoured White in Wei Yi-Gao Rui, China 2016.
10.0-0 10.a3 ♗e7 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.f4 0-0 13.♕h5 g6 14.♕h6 ♖e8 15.♗e3 resulted in a typically complex Scheveningen type of position in Nepomniachtchi-Palac, Tbilisi 2017.



10...♗e7 11.f4 0-0 12.♕g4
Alternatives are 12.a3 and 12.♕h5.
12...♖e8 13.♗e3 ♘c6 14.♖ad1 ♖c8?!

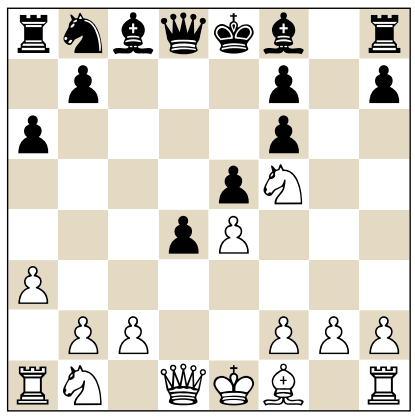


15.e5! ♘cxe5
15...dxe5 16.f5 just wins, and so does 15...d5 16.♘xd5! exd5 17.♗xd5.
16.fxe5 ♘xe5 17.♕g3 With an edge for White.

In his next white game (yes, they went into a tiebreak!), Demchenko went for another SOS (6.a3) versus the Najdorf.

Anton Demchenko
Alexander Areshchenko
Tbilisi 2017 (1.3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.a3
It's a while ago, but faithful readers of New In Chess might like to flip back to issue 2006/6 for our SOS take on this line.
6...e5 7.♘f5 d5 8.♗g5 d4 9.♗xf6 gxf6! 9...♕xf6 10.♘d5 was indicated in the original article as better for White. After 10...♕d8 11.♕g4 ♗xf5 12.♕xf5 ♗d6 13.h4!? the World Champion won in his trademark style (Carlsen-Wojtaszek, Wijk aan Zee 2017).
10.♘b1!? This is a recent development. It looks (and is) passive, but White wants to control square e4 when Black takes on f5.

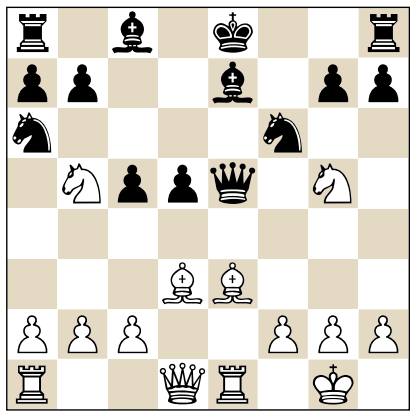


10...♗xf5 When Black does not take the knight, White is slightly up for preference:
– 10...♗e6 11.♘d2 ♘c6 12.♗d3 ♕d7 13.0-0 0-0-0 14.b4, Ivanov-Gurvich, Moscow 2017.
– 10...♕b6 11.♘d2 ♗e6 12.♗c4 ♘d7, Fernandez-Hernandez, Tenerife 2017.
11.exf5 ♕d5 12.♕d3 ♕a5+
White is better after 12...♗h6 13.♘c3, or 12...♘c6 13.♘d2 ♗h6 (13...♕a5) 14.♘e4; Schou Moldt-Ochsner, Horsens 2013. Best is 12...♘d7 13.♘d2 ♕c6.
13.♘d2 ♗b4?! 13...♘d7 **14.0-0-0 ♗xd2+ 15.♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 16.♖xd2**
And even if your engine doesn't agree, this endgame is more pleasant to play for White (bishop controls light squares, better pawn structure). Demchenko won a good game.

Bu eliminated the World Champion, but was knocked out by Svidler in the rapids.

Peter Svidler
Bu Xiangzhi
Tbilisi 2017 (4.4)

1.♘f3 f5 2.d3! The 'Improved Lisitsin Gambit' (the original is 2.e4) is how I dubbed this in New In Chess 2002/3. Bu was caught by surprise, it seems.
2...d6 3.e4 e5 4.♘c3 ♗e7? 5.d4! fxe4 6.♘xe4 d5 7.♘eg5! Also pretty good is 7.♘xe5 dxe4 8.♗c4, Borik-Renner, Germany 1999. **7...exd4 8.♗d3 ♕d6 9.♘xd4 c5 10.♘b5 ♕e5+ 11.♗e3 ♘a6** 11...d4 12.♘f3. **12.0-0 ♘f6 13.♖e1**



and White was already completely winning!

Hope you enjoyed our SOS-ride through Tbilisi! ■

Capablanca poses with Hollywood actress Mae Clarke at Metro Goldwyn Mayer studios on the set of Turn Back the Clock (1933). Although there is no evidence to substantiate the rumours, the image has been a launch pad for many spurious anecdotes about Capa over the years.

Capa goes to Hollywood

In the glamorous world of film stars and moguls, the chess champ was chasing his own dream. In vain.

In 1933 José Raúl Capablanca spent five months in and around Los Angeles, where he was fêted in the sumptuous societies of Beverly Hills, Santa Monica and, of course, Hollywood, where, as the saying goes, the streets are paved with dreams. But while he was never averse to the high life – or female beauty – 'Capa' was increasingly tormented by frustration. How could he win back the world title, of which he felt the rightful owner, if Alekhine shunned him and there appeared to be no sponsors to meet the new champion's excessive financial demands? **BRUCE MONSON** takes us back to a memorable visit that may not have brought Capa what he was hoping for but produced a wealth of stories.

On a drizzly Saturday morning on April 1, 1933, a foghorn bellowed outside Los Angeles harbour, announcing arrival of the Panama-Pacific liner *SS California* after her weeklong voyage from Balboa, Panama. On board was a 44-year-old 'Diplomat' from Cuba, one José Raúl Capablanca, former World Chess Champion.

As 'Capa' descended the gangplank he was met not by the usual bustle of fanfare and photographers, but a single *Los Angeles Times* staff reporter and two elderly gentlemen from Beverly Hills, Henry MacMahon and Dr. Robert Griffith, names Capa probably recognized, though not with particular fondness. In fact, there must have been some palpable tension in those first moments, and the irony of the day – April Fools' Day – could not have been lost on the two Californians.

A year earlier MacMahon had sent Capablanca a letter inviting him to play in the Pasadena International Chess Congress, scheduled for August 1932 on the heels of the 1932 Los Angeles Summer Olympics. A tournament that was also to include Alexander Alekhine! Capa naturally accepted, but his response had been measured, perhaps disguising his general state of desperation as to whether he would *ever* get Alekhine to the board again for a World Championship match. 'It is now sixteen years since I was in California last,' he said, 'and it would give me a great deal of pleasure to pay it a second visit.' In reality the invitation was 'a godsend,' noted Capablanca historian Miguel Sanchez, 'as if Caissa had once more interceded to protect her once favourite son.'

Of course it wasn't to be. Hearing of the invitation, Alekhine quickly crafted a letter to MacMahon demanding an additional '2000 dollars extra fee' if the Cuban were allowed to play, a fee the Congress Committee could not manage. In the end Capa was *disinvited* and it fell upon MacMahon to inform Capa of the bad news.

No doubt feeling some guilt, MacMahon expended some effort getting Capa to come to Tinseltown anyway – *after* Alekhine's departure – even priming the financial pump of potential backers in advance of his arrival. Writing in the March 1933 *The Chess Reporter*, the California chess organ he edited, MacMahon drops some bread crumbs. 'Unless a Maecenas or two or three bob up magically in the next few months, there's slight prospect of an Alekhine vs. Capablanca meet this year.'

Clearly, money was on Capa's mind. Ten thousand dollars to be exact (the magical number that would allegedly lock Alekhine into a rematch). But why Los Angeles and why now? Capa had never even been there before. He did visit the famous Mechanic's Institute Chess Club in San Francisco during his 1916 U.S. tour, but for reasons unknown he sailed right past

the City of Angels to that other 'saintly' California bookend, San Diego, before exiting the Golden State. But things were different now. While California was no less hamstrung by the Great Depression than anywhere else, Hollywood continued to churn out uplifting 'escapist' movies, giving the impression that the grass was somehow greener 'out West'.

Alekhine's Shadow

It was also no coincidence that Los Angeles was the very city Alekhine had only recently departed from. Following the Pasadena tournament he had lingered in the area for some weeks performing exhibitions and radio interviews. And now he stood on the doorstep of Chicago for the 1933 Century of Progress World's Fair where several highly publicized exhibitions were on the docket, including a 'blindfold séance' and a 'Living Chess Game' which National Chess Foundation president Maurice Kuhns buoyantly promoted as 'an open air pageantry... a game where living Kings and Queens with vast and pretentious retinue of Courtiers and slaves will march and bow to the music of many bands... where real live horses will prance about mounted with Ye Knights of Olde'.

With so much attention on Alekhine, Capa's plan wasn't difficult to decipher. He wanted to mirror the Russian's movements tit-for-tat, to better him in each city, each exhibition, each 'performance', and along the way expose him for the underhanded tactics he was using to keep the world champion title from its *rightful* owner.

Flickertown

A frail 75 year-old Joseph Lippman was all smiles when Capa arrived at his Santa Monica estate where the Cuban would be staying during his sojourn in 'Flickertown'. They knew each other already. It was Lippman who had hosted Capablanca seventeen years earlier to the day on April 1, 1916 in the Mormon stronghold of Salt Lake City, Utah during the Cuban's first U.S. tour. A prominent Salt Lake attorney and newspaper editor, Lippman retired to California in 1919 where he and his wife became prominent for their patronage of the arts. Their ocean-front home in Santa Monica was the site of many gala events honouring movie stars, musicians and diplomats. The 'Garden Party' in August 1932 was one such event, honouring Alekhine, Kashdan, Fine, Reshevsky, Steiner and the other participants of the Pasadena Chess Congress (see Herman Steiner's Hollywood, New In Chess 2015/6).

Lippman's generous financial support for chess events in the Southland had earned him the nickname 'Maecenas of Chess' and it was *hoped* that river of support would flow in Capa's direction. It did not. Perhaps a fragment from an interview in the *Santa Monica Outlook* offers some insight: 'Tactics of the prize ring in which champions have been known to avoid bouts with formidable contenders for fear of losing their titles have been adopted by Dr. Alexander Alekhine, Russian chess master, to avoid a match that would jeopardize his standing, according to José R. Capablanca, Pan-American chess champion, who is now visiting at the home of Joseph Lippman in Santa Monica... Unwilling to discuss the situation at great length, the handsome young Cuban shrugged his shoulders with a Latin gesture of helplessness and said, "He simply does not want to play. He argues, beats around technicalities and makes it impossible to arrange another match."'

He was biting his tongue. While Capa was diplomatic in his public statements, in private he was prone to vitriolic outbursts whenever Alekhine was the subject. There can be no doubt that Lippman – who had nothing but positive memories of Alekhine – received a healthy dose of anti-Alekhine invective, which may not have sat well with him.

Nothing was going right for the Cuban; not in chess, not in Cuba, not in marriage... not even the weather. In the same *Santa Monica Outlook* interview he was asked his impressions of southern California. 'The weather has been very bad since I arrived,' he said, 'probably also before.' The reporter chuckled, noting that Capa's quip was 'better than any of George Bernard Shaw's comments on the same subject'.

Cecil B. DeMille

On April 4th the *Hollywood Citizen News* announced Capa's first actual chess engagement, hosted by the Beverly Hills Chess Club. Evidently it was a meet and greet reception. Capa played no actual chess but he did give a short lecture on one of his games.

This is almost certainly where Capa first met the famous movie director Cecil B. DeMille, who was an avid chess fan and member of the Beverly Hills club since its inception in 1930.

As he often did when speaking about chess, DeMille would

A wound that never healed

Capablanca's defeat at the hands of Alekhine in the World Championship match in Buenos Aires in 1927 came as a shock to the chess community (hadn't the untouchable Cuban won the tournament in New York in that same year two and a half points ahead of that same Alekhine?) and dented the 'human chess machine's' sense of invincibility. In the years that followed Capa's frustration only grew as his attempts to regain the title were consistently thwarted. He never got a rematch and between his loss in Argentina and his death in New York on March 8, 1942, he would only play three more games against his biggest rival. Capablanca won in Nottingham 1936, the two games they played in AVRO 1938 ended in a draw and a win for Alekhine.

disparage his own chess abilities but then quickly pivot to the story of his 'brilliant' great-uncle, Richard DeMille, who was quite a good player, even blindfold. Capa undoubtedly obliged the 'small talk' etiquette by recounting (tongue firmly in-cheek) his own brush with 'movie stardom' in the Russian short film, *Chess Fever*, filmed during the Moscow 1925 tournament; a film and director – Vsevolod Pudovkin – DeMille was quite familiar with.

The idea of Capa taking a movie role of some sort was definitely bandied about. One suggestion was for him to play the protagonist in the 1933 chess-themed novel *The Hollow Queen*, though it never got any serious traction. Even the most prosperous studios were haemorrhaging red ink at the time, and DeMille himself was nursing a severely damaged reputation after a series of expensive flops. His personal wealth had also plummeted from $2.9 million in 1930 to near bankruptcy by 1932. Movie roles aside, there is no doubt a foundation had been laid for some sort of 'publicity stunt' between Capa and DeMille. Perhaps this is where ideas of a 'living chess' exhibition were first formulated.

Legendary movie director Cecil B. DeMille oversees the 'script' of the game between Capa and Steiner. This exact position would appear in the 'Living Chess' exhibition the following evening, but with Steiner playing the black side – the losing side.

Ham and Eggs

Capablanca also met with Carl Laemmle Sr., President of Universal Pictures Corporation. Laemmle was also president of the Los Angeles Breakfast Club, an exclusive club open only to members and their guests which at the time met every Wednesday morning at the Ambassador Hotel on Wilshire Blvd., the same location where the First Piatigorsky Cup would be held thirty years later in 1963. (Tragically it was also the location where Senator Robert 'Bobby' Kennedy was assassinated in 1968.)

Defining itself more by what it is *not* than what it is, one pamphlet tells us the Breakfast Club is '...Not a Church, Not a Lodge, Not a Service Club, but the Shrine of Friendship... the Democracy of Ham and Eggs, where everybody knows everybody, and everybody is just a "Ham" or an "Egg", hailing each other with the Grand Salute: "Hello Ham!" and "Hello Egg!" Some members even acted as roosters, occasionally letting out a "cockadoodleoo!"'

This all sounds like so much nonsense – which was probably Capa's first reaction – but it was a tremendous honour to be invited to the club. Distinguished speakers would come on stage and address the group over the microphone, which was broadcast live to Los Angeles listeners over Radio KFWB. Past speakers ranged from sports legends such as Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey to diplomats, politicians, generals, explorers and even a sitting U.S. President, Calvin Coolidge.

On April 6th Carl Laemmle invited Capablanca as one of the honoured guests along with movie starlets Ginger Rogers and Gloria Stuart, and the Korean diplomat Kim Kyu-sik who had been the chief Korean delegate at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Following breakfast, Capa would have been expected to stand at the mike and give a 'short talk' about the nature of his visit to Los Angeles, hopefully with a wisecrack or two. The festivities ended with Capa being inducted as an 'honorary member,' which *required* the conscript to mount a wooden hobby horse with a sign that read either 'ham' or 'egg,' depending which he deemed himself. What he chose to be we don't know.

Battle of Titans?

It is noteworthy that no other Los Angeles area newspaper mentioned Capa's Beverly Hills engagement on April 4th, not even the *Los Angeles*

Times which *does* mention a lecture by Herman Steiner at another chess club across town on the same day! This may be incidental. But maybe not. *Something* happened on or before the Beverly Hills event. Capa evidently stopped by the Los Angeles Athletic Club – the site of his upcoming simultaneous exhibition scheduled for April 8 – and met with Frank Garbutt, the director and co-founder of that historic club.

The L.A.A.C. was the 'chess Mecca' of Los Angeles. Every major chess personality who travelled through Los Angeles eventually found their way there, from Emanuel Lasker to Reshevsky, Marshall, Alekhine and many more, and they all had one thing in common, Frank A. Garbutt (1869-1947).

Garbutt was easily one of the most important figures in Los Angeles history, if not American history. He designed and held multiple patents on oil drilling equipment, detergent, even chewing gum, and invested heavily in automotive, aviation and ferry industries. He was also one of the original founders of *Famous Players-Lasky* (later Paramount Studios), the studio that spearheaded the transformation of Hollywood from a rural agricultural community into the movie capital of the world.

Like Joseph Lippman, Garbutt was a 'Maecenas' of chess who not only had a love for the game but a long history of supporting it financially. He was undoubtedly on Henry MacMahon's short-list of people who could legitimately help Capablanca's cause ... *if* the Cuban played his cards right. Did he?

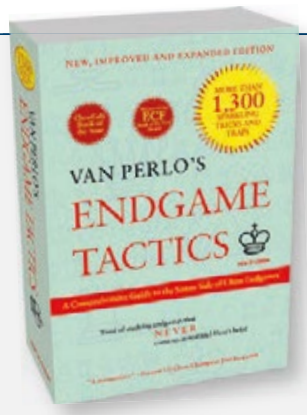
The following day the *Los Angeles Times* published a provocative headline, 'Capablanca May Take on Club Chess Champ', presenting a situation that must have taken Capa's breath away: 'The royal game of chess has crowded its way into the field of major athletics at the Los Angeles Athletic Club since the arrival there of José Capablanca, who for more than six years held the undisputed world's championship. The club has a champion of its own, one Prof. Herman Steiner, former European star, and the fans, led by Frank A Garbutt, are anxious to bring the two titans together in a battle for supremacy.'

'Garbutt was easily one of the most important figures in Los Angeles history, if not American history.'

Battle of titans? Of course Capablanca was a titan of chess – arguably the greatest – but Steiner? He was a strong IM but well below Capablanca's level. Did Steiner seriously think he could challenge Capa? The short answer is no, but you have to put Steiner's situation in context. Following the Pasadena tournament Steiner remained in Los Angeles and in the space of six months had managed to get married, establish a 'chess college', secure gainful employment as 'club professional' at the Hollywood Athletic Club and develop a large following of supporters, chief among them Frank Garbutt. Back in New York he was a small fish in a big pond. In Los Angeles he was not only a big fish, but *the* big fish!

Capablanca's arrival was initially welcomed by Steiner with great enthusiasm. Too much, evidently. Young and impetuous, Steiner saw Capa as the ultimate publicity chew-toy and wanted to take advantage of what he *believed* would be a short stay by the Cuban. Simply being on the same stage with Capa would lend immediate clout to his new West Coast operation. His only 'goal' in a match would be to make it a respectable fight.

Needless to say, Capablanca was not interested in playing a match with Steiner. If it didn't have Alekhine attached to it he wasn't interested. And yet, paradoxically, it was here that Capa missed out on a golden opportunity to turn the screws on Alekhine! He would have beaten Steiner easily (probably brutally if he chose to be ruthless), but more importantly he would have gained an invaluable ally in Steiner himself! Steiner's true calling was in chess promotion (see Herman Steiner's Hollywood, New In



Did you know that endgames are actually fun?

"A powerful book. It does not wish to drill, it just wishes to entertain. And it does!"
Gerhard Josten, Rochade Europa

"It cannot but help to improve your chess, painlessly, enjoyably."
Chess Today

paperback | 608 pages | €29.95 | available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com | a NEW IN CHESS publication

Chess 2015/6)! Instead of Capa's sour milk campaign, Steiner would have turned the Alekhine debacle on its head with a positive spin and sold it as a 'sure thing' to his deep-pocketed friends in Hollywood, notably Frank Garbutt.

As lost opportunities go, they don't get much bigger. Garbutt is generally credited as the linchpin for bringing the Olympics to Los Angeles in 1932. Hosting a world championship chess match (likely with coverage by Paramount Studios!) would have been a snap.

Unfortunately, Capa did something far worse than just refuse to play Steiner. He left the idea dangling in the air like a piece of meat over a tiger. Most likely he was just trying to get out of the situation diplomatically, not saying yes but not saying no either. This served only to exacerbate the situation, as evidenced by the antagonistic *Los Angeles Times* coverage of Capa's simultaneous exhibition on April 8, which all but accused the Cuban of ducking Steiner!

Clearly, the relationship between Capablanca and Steiner had soured. But evidently it wasn't yet bad enough to derail a 'Living Chess' exhibition idea Capablanca and Cecil B. DeMille had concocted a few days earlier, an event that was also to include Steiner.

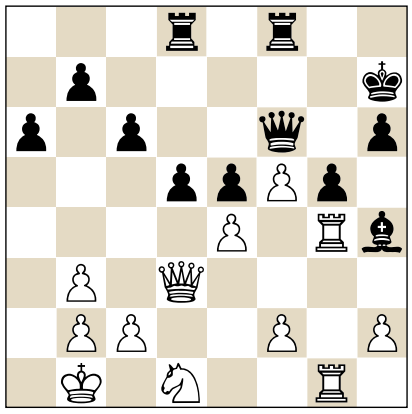
Jose Capablanca and Herman Steiner meet for a 'friendly' game at the Los Angeles Athletic Club, April 6, 1933.

Chess with Living Pieces

On the evening of April 6th – the same day as his visit to the Breakfast Club – there was a private dinner reception for Capablanca held in the elegant 'English Room' at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Steiner was also invited, no doubt with the expectation of hashing-out details for their proposed match. That didn't happen. However, there *was* a photo taken of the two engaged in a 'friendly' game.

The lack of clocks confirms this was not a serious game, certainly not a match game. But 'friendly' or not Herman undoubtedly took the game seriously, and by appearances he had the Cuban on the ropes! This is the position with White to move:

Herman Steiner
José Raúl Capablanca
Los Angeles Athletic Club,
April 6, 1933



Given Black's threat to capture on e4 it is not difficult to find 1.♕e2!, when the threat of ♖xh4 followed by ♖g6 lingers heavily over Black's position. Now after 1...dxe4, 2.♘e3 renews the threat. With the horrible position of Black's bishop the position is much better for White.

Unfortunately, we do not know Steiner's actual move or the end result, or even if they played additional games after this one. Unlikely, since Capa had other interests of a feminine nature in his sights. Among the special guests that night was the beautiful Australian actress, Finis Barton, who had parts in several recent movies, including *My Pal, the King* (1932) starring Tom Mix and Mickey Rooney. A child star in Sydney, she came to Hollywood in 1930 with her mother and soon after was picking up bit parts in theatre and film.

Unlike apocryphal tales around Capa's involvement with other film stars, there actually *is* some evidence that Capa and Finis Barton had a relationship that went beyond mere acquaintances. Returning to Sydney in 1946 after sixteen years abroad she harked back on her experiences in America. Of the 'many noted people' she had met and worked with, she mentioned only two men whose 'friendships' were particularly special, actor Fredric March and José Capablanca!

That night at the Los Angeles Athletic Club a photo of the two was taken. Finis was not a member of the L.A.A.C. and thus would have been there by invitation, most likely as guest of Capa himself. The expression on Capa's face and his body language suggests he was enjoying the moment.

Note also that Finis is grasping the white queen in the photo! This is significant. It was just one in a series of photos involving Capa and Finis (and Herman Steiner) in which she was portrayed in the context of a white queen. She was to have the starring role as the white queen – Capa's queen – in a 'Living Chess' match!

Capa was no stranger to chess exhibitions with 'living' pieces. Since 1911 he had participated in a number of them. But the one in Los Angeles was special for a number of reasons, most notably the involvement of Cecil B. DeMille. The plan was to have a theme constructed around the white queen which would give Finis a feature part in the game itself while Capa was to loosely reprise his 'role' in the Russian short film, *Chess Fever*, where he interacted with actress Anna Zemtsova ('the girl'), using a chess piece – a white queen – as a prop.

In the movie Moscow has gone crazy with 'chess fever' because of the international tournament of 1925 being held there. Our heroine's fiancé is among the victims and missed their wedding date because of it. She is ready to commit suicide by drinking a vial of poison she *thinks* she got from the pharmacy (where they were also playing chess!), but when she unwraps the tissue it is not a vial but a chess piece – the white queen! Infuriated, she heaves the piece .... which the approaching Capablanca catches in his hands. 'Because of chess I hate the whole world!' she snaps. 'I understand', replies Capa. 'In the company of a beautiful woman I too hate chess!' Capa then flings the chess piece into a nearby snowbank.

In Hollywood the white queen was *also* used as a prop. On April 10th, the day before the exhibition, Capablanca, Miss Barton and Steiner met with DeMille at his Paramount Studios office where they went over the 'script', i.e., the game score. There were also a series of publicity photos taken, including a remarkable photo of Capablanca and Steiner with Cecil B. DeMille which unfortunately never made it into print (see photo on page 63).

Instead, the April 11 morning edition of the *Los Angeles Times* printed a different photo under the tagline 'A Queen in Hand is Worth—'. Mimicking his scene from Chess Fever, Capa is shown holding up a chess piece – a white queen – to Finis Barton, denoting her role in the 'Living Chess' performance that evening ... as his queen!

The exhibition took place in the gymnasium on the sixth floor of the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Henry MacMahon provided the colour commentary: 'Capa and Steiner give a good "staging" of "perfect" chess game,' he said. 'Twas a moving symphony in reds and blacks and marble-like whiteness of arms and limbs. Kings, knights, rooks and bishops were members of the sterner sex, queens and pawns offered feminine pulchritude, long-robed for the consorts and only doublets and – er – abbreviated trunks for the "foot soldiers".'

Capablanca shows the finer points of the game to movie starlet Finis Barton. Note that Finis is grasping the white queen, the role she will play in the 'Living Chess' exhibition.

José Raúl Capablanca
Herman Steiner
'Living Chess' exhibition
Los Angeles Athletic Club,
April 11, 1933

Commentary by Henry MacMahon in *The Chess Reporter* and staff reporter Lyle Abbott in the *Los Angeles Herald*.

'When all was set, Mr. DeMille announced: "It is White's move." Capablanca studied the board a moment and said: "Pawn to king four!" Thereupon Edward Everett, chairman of the athletic club's chess committee escorted a petite blonde "pawn" to the proper square, and the game was on.' (Abbott)

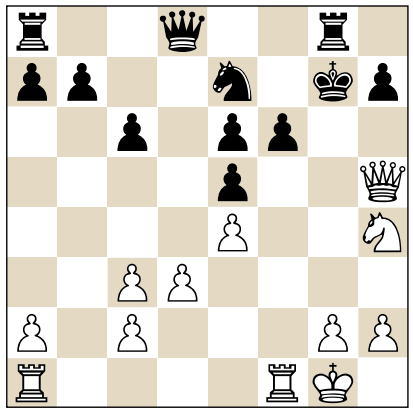
1.e4 'Steiner took his eyes off the scene before him and turned to the referee. "Pawn to king four", he said, echoing the move of the former world champion.' (Abbott)

1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.♗g5 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♘e7 9.♘h4 c6 10.♗c4 ♗e6? 11.♗xf6! gxf6 12.♗xe6 fxe6

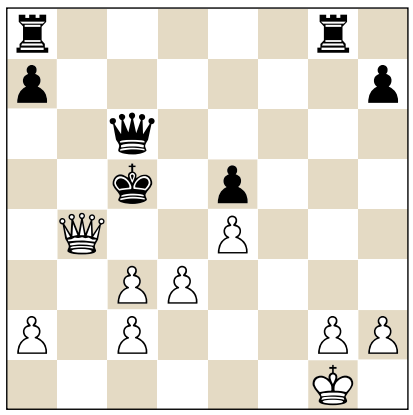
'At the twelfth move Black's Kingside was already "shot".' (MacMahon)

13.♕g4+ 'The white queen was especially easy to look at. "I hope she wins", said a spectator.' (MacMahon)

13...♔f7 14.f4! ♖g8 15.♕h5+ ♔g7 16.fxe5 dxe5



17.♖xf6! 'At move seventeen a round of applause greeted Capa's sacrifice of his King's Rook for a Pawn adjacent to the enemy King. That black-doubleted and black-hosed monarch was already out in the open and fleeing.' (MacMahon) **17...♔xf6 18.♖f1+ ♘f5 19.♘xf5! exf5 20.♖xf5+ ♔e7 21.♕f7+** 'The White Queen bored into the position.' (MacMahon) **21...♔d6 22.♖f6+ ♔c5** 'He was chased from his castled fortress by QR and Q to the square QB4.' (MacMahon) **23.♕xb7! ♕b6 24.♖xc6+! ♕xc6 25.♕b4**



'In 24 (sic) moves the blonde queen on Capablanca's side was shifted suddenly to a commanding square and Referee DeMille rose and announced: "Checkmate!" ' (Abbott)

'Attacked from the seventh rank by the opposing queen and ill defended by his own Consort, he succumbed on Move 25 to a pretty mate – a finale preceded by scintillant, Morphy-like proffers of material by the Castilian Maestro.' (MacMahon)

The game is a sparkling gem, understandably hailed by many Capablanca fans as one of his greatest, even going so far as to label it a 'brilliancy', a 'masterpiece' and even 'Immortal' as Fred Reinfeld intimated in his book *The Immortal Games of Capablanca*, published by Al Horowitz's *Chess Review* in 1942 just six months after Capablanca's untimely death that same year. Steiner was not pleased. He sent a letter to Horowitz informing him the game was 'prearranged by Capablanca, who refused to play any other way at that time'. 'Had Mr Reinfeld consulted me before going to press,' Steiner continued, 'I would gladly have given him all the facts with proof thereof.'

This previously unpublished photo from the Herman Steiner Archives shows Steiner (with bow tie) 'contemplating' his reaction to Capablanca's rook sacrifice on f6.

Capablanca purists have balked at this, claiming Capablanca would 'Never agree to a fake game'. They also disparage Steiner's character by claiming he 'conveniently waited for Capablanca to die before making these claims'. They're wrong on both counts. While nowhere near Alekhine's egregious degree of 'doctoring' his games, Capablanca *did* have a precedent of manufacturing games, both for exhibition and even tournament purposes. The most famous is his alleged 'blindfold' game against Jaime Baca-Arús in 1912, held at a social event in Capa's honour in Havana. But there were others, including one using the exact same Four Knights Opening as in the Steiner game! At the Moscow 1936 tournament Capablanca instigated a prearranged 'draw' against Andre Lilienthal, instructing him on what he should play. Amusingly, Lilienthal forgot the 'script' and ended up in a bad position, which required Capa to play some silly moves so as *not* to win the game! This led Nikolai Krylenko, the commissar of Soviet chess who was in the audience, to retort loudly: 'An opening of four knights and two donkeys!' (see Sosonko interview with Lilienthal, New In Chess 1995/5).

Mexican Standoff

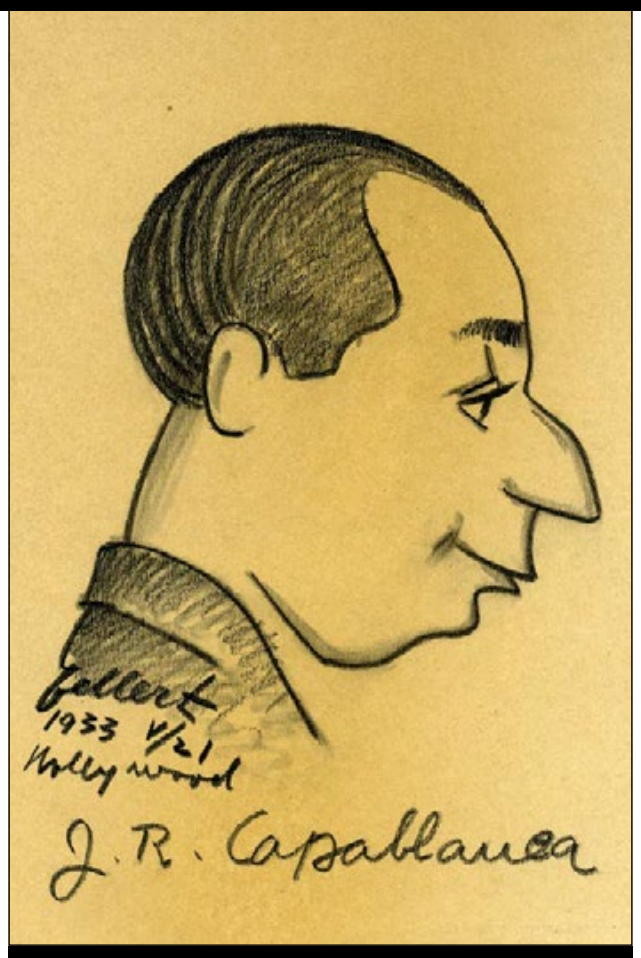
Three days later Capa departed for Mexico at the invitation of José Araiza, the army captain who was Mexico's strongest player, behind Carlos Torre. While there he met up with his exiled brother, Ramiro Capablanca, and they travelled to all the same places that Alekhine had visited only months earlier. The aim – again – was to upstage Alekhine before the same large crowds the Russian had encountered, and as biographer Miguel Sanchez observed, 'to produce a spark that revitalized

the efforts for a world championship match among spectators who would like to see them face off'. From April 15 to May 17 Capa visited twelve cities in Mexico, playing an incredible 21 exhibitions encompassing 464 games, scoring 435 wins against only 10 losses and 19 draws, more than doubling Alekhine's total of 201 games in 10 exhibitions (+160 -19 = 22), although in fairness several of Alekhine's exhibitions were blindfold performances and he also played in the hastily-organized 'International tournament' which also included Isaac Kashdan.

Intermezzo

After his successful excursion south-of-the-border Capa returned to Los Angeles where he would remain for another four months. José Rodriguez, the noted *Los Angeles Times* music critic and program director of KFI/KECA Radio, hosted Capa many nights at his Beverly Hills home. Rodriguez was so moved by Capa's plight with Alekhine he programmed 'air time' for the Cuban on his radio show, and even approached the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce in an unsuccessful bid to get them involved. A curious side effect of this relationship was that Capa became utterly transfixed on music and musicians during this time, perhaps a welcome repose from his own troubles. Capa developed a particularly close friendship with the renowned 'musicologist and conductor' Nicolas Slonimsky, who was featured at the famous Hollywood Bowl that month. Slonimsky was equally spellbound by Capa (a regular bromance!) whom he said reminded him of 'an intelligent edition of Rudolph Valentino'. He even composed a musical 'chess piece' in Capa's honour.

For a couple of weeks Capa was the houseguest of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer scene artist and painter, Warren Newcombe, whose vibrant backdrop work will be immediately recognizable to anyone who has seen



The caricature of Capablanca by Hungarian painter and chess fan Emery Gellert.

The Wizard of Oz, the 1939 classic starring Judy Garland. Newcombe was known for taking in guests with special skill sets in the hope their talents might rub off. Evidently Capa's reciprocation was to give him chess lessons ... and to be his tennis partner! Newcombe was even more fanatical about tennis, which must have thrilled Capa since his love of tennis was exceeded only by his love for baseball.

'Permanent Association'

Even before Capa had left for his Mexico excursion he was solicited by screenwriter Richard Schayer and cinematographer Leslie Bain (husband of future U.S. Women's champion, Mary Bain) with an offer for him to set up shop as their 'club professional' at the Hollywood Chess & Bridge Club. While there had been many ad hoc versions of the 'Hollywood Chess Club' over the years, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. spearheaded the first official version in 1932 at a private residence on LaMirada Ave. Some of its members included Lew Ayres, Marlene Dietrich and Joseph von Sternberg, the latter even becoming one of Capa's private students. But by April 1933 Fairbanks had resigned his post for personal reasons, turning over management to Schayer and Bain. The club was 'a quiet place to push a pawn', noted Schayer, but they were looking to stir things up, moving the club to the old *Masquer's Club* location on Yucca Street in Hollywood. Capa accepted Schayer's offer, which was sweetened by free room and board in one of the studio apartments on the club's second floor, frequently home to wayward actors. Leslie Bain wasted no time announcing Capa's 'permanent association' with the club, using the exact same wording Frank Garbutt had used to advertise Herman Steiner's affiliation with the Los Angeles Athletic Club. *That* was the rub – one-upmanship with the L.A.A.C. 'You got Steiner? Fine! *We* have Capablanca!' It was the playground chess equivalent of 'Oh yeah, well *my* brother can beat up *your* brother!'

Schayer extrapolated on the marquee development: 'If Mr. Capablanca will make his permanent headquarters here,' he said, 'Hollywood will be the scene of international chess matches and a probable match between Capablanca and Dr. Alekhine, present world champion, for the crown.' Interim *Los Angeles Times* chess editor, R.J. Ryan – filling in for the regular chess editor, Clif Sherwood, who was then in the clutches of an existential meltdown – went a step further: 'Senor Capablanca himself says he contemplates making our Southland his permanent residence.'

It's difficult to say where hype met reality but Herman Steiner saw this 'permanent residence' chatter a bit differently than most. The paint wasn't even dry on his new throne as 'King of California chess' and already his monarchy was being toppled by a Banana Republic! Over the coming weeks Capa and Steiner engaged in a tit-for-tat battle of lectures, classes and speaking engagements at area clubs. 'Competition being the life of trade', wrote Henry MacMahon in *The Chess Reporter*, 'tis interesting to note that on

May 13 Herman Steiner will give his "gigantic simultaneous exhibition" at his International Chess Club ... and for May 14 Hollywood Chess and Bridge Club ... announces an all-day show by J.R. Capablanca – lecture, simultaneous, etc. ...'

On May 21 Capablanca 'put in a whole day at the Hollywood Chess and Bridge Club.... He was vastly entertaining'. Later he 'joined a little dinner of the "twelve movie chess propagandists".' Capa also played a 23-board simul that night. Although no photos have surfaced from the event, there *was* a caricature done of him by the Hungarian painter and chess fan, Emery Gellert. It was at this exhibition where Capa famously blundered a piece against Mary Bain, the future U.S. Women's Champion.

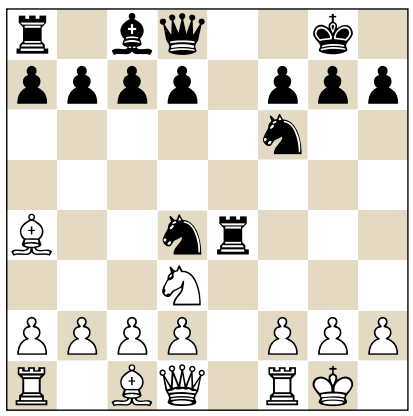
José Raúl Capablanca
Mary Bain
Simultaneous Exhibition
Hollywood 1933

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗c5 5.0-0 0-0 6.♘xe5 ♖e8 7.♘d3 ♗d4 8.♘e2?! The first of three progressively bad moves by Capablanca.

8...♖xe4 9.♘xd4? Already this is a serious mistake which leaves the white bishop on b5 in a precarious state. Necessary was 9.c3 or 9.♘g3.

9...♘xd4 Even so, Capa now makes a surprising mistake...

10.♗a4??



... which Mary quickly pounces on.

10...♘e2+ 11.♔h1 ♘xc1 Oops! White is losing a piece (12.♘c5 ♖h4 13.g3 ♘g4! is lights out). Disgusted with himself, Capablanca resigned on the spot.

Curiously, the June 1933 issue of *The Chess Reporter* recorded it as a draw, giving Capa's final score for the exhibition as 21 wins and two draws. However, in Douglas Houghton's *Pasadena Star-News* chess column the actual game score is given, noting Capablanca's resignation after move 11, but with an asterisk, 'Note – Mrs. Bain would not accept.' Why she did this we are never told, though the Cuban's new 'association' with the club probably had something to do with it. In any case, I agree with Miguel Sanchez that Mary Bain should go down in history as 'the woman who pardoned Capablanca!'

Morphy Day Carnival

In June Capa was the featured attraction at the 4th annual Morphy Day Carnival held in nearby Sierra Madre. According to Judge Charles W. Forman, who founded the event in 1930, the object was to arouse interest in chess and make Sierra Madre a 'world centre of repose'. 'Our town should be to chess what Wimbledon is to tennis', he said. Capa gave a ten-minute lecture on Morphy, focusing less on the American's tactical brilliancies and more on what *truly* set him apart from his contemporaries – positional understanding. 'It is *stance* in golf, but in chess it is *position*', he said. 'Before Morphy, chess was played in purely combinative style for violent attacks, staking the whole result on one single thing. He started the foundation for the style of game we play today. For he discovered that *position* is the most important part of the game of chess.' Capa went on to share stories of his trip to New Orleans where he met Morphy's contemporaries, C. A. Maurian and Judge McConnell.

Exit... Stage Left

For a while Capablanca may have had high expectations that his newfound Los Angeles connections would – at long last – bring about the World Championship rematch he coveted. But his hopes must have waned sharply as July turned into August, still no closer to the Alekhine agenda than when he arrived.

The date and nature of Capa's departure from Los Angeles has always been a mystery. There were no parties, banquets, or ballyhoo of any kind. Not a single newspaper article, not even from a chess source! Originally Capa had planned to travel up the coast and tour other American cities before returning to New York. But that also did not happen. It was as if he simply vanished.

He didn't, of course. Most likely his sudden exit (escape?) had less to do with chess and more to do with the political state of Cuba, which had been in full riot, leading to the sudden fall of Machado's regime. Boarding a train around August 9th or 10th Capa travelled to Chicago where he remained for a few days as guest of Alfred MacArthur. Capa played no chess while in Chicago, but before departing for New York he spent a day at the World's Fair, yet again tracing Alekhine's footsteps, wondering what *might* have been.

Capa never again returned to Los Angeles, although seven years later in 1940 he wrote a letter to his economist friend, Dr. Benjamin Anderson Jr., who had moved to Los Angeles in 1939 to take a professorship at UCLA. We do not have Capa's letter but in his response Anderson offers a cryptic clue to what Capa had written: 'Thanks for your tip about Steiner', he said, 'I have only been at his club once; but if I go again I will have your caution in mind.' ■

USCF Master **Bruce Monson** is a firefighter-paramedic in Colorado Springs and a chess writer, with a passion for chess history. He is working on a book on Herman Steiner (see also 'Herman Steiner's Hollywood' in New In Chess 2015/6) in which a large chapter will be dedicated to Capablanca's visit to Tinseltown.

Magnus says ‘relax’ on Isle of Man

They came in unforeseen numbers, but all the elite players that were prematurely knocked out of the World Cup were welcomed with open arms by the Chess.com IoM Masters. Even World Champion Magnus Carlsen entered the rapidly growing Open on the Isle of Man, hungry for chess after his brief sojourn in Tbilisi. With a relaxed approach, both freewheeling and energetic, the World Champion was the fully deserved winner of the £50,000 first prize. **JAN TIMMAN** reports.

World Champion wins first ‘classical’ tourney in 14 months

The open tournament in Douglas, Isle of Man, saw its fourth edition this year, for the second time under the name of Chess.com IoM Masters. The first two years it was named Poker Stars Masters, after a company established by Isai Scheinberg and domiciled in the Isle of Man. The Scheinberg family is still the event’s main sponsor. Isai Scheinberg rarely courts publicity, but this year he visited the tournament a few times.

The event was billed as ‘The strongest open tournament of 2017’, a justified claim after Magnus Carlsen decided to take part after his defeat at the hands of Bu Xiangzhi in Tbilisi. The Douglas organizers continued to keep an eagle eye on the developments in the World Cup. A number of top players was on their list of participants, but if they were to reach the semi-finals, they would never arrive on the island in time. They were lucky: Kramnik, Caruana, Anand and Nakamura were also eliminated prematurely, with the result that

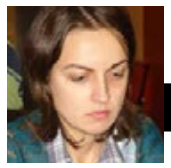
ALINA L'AMI

At the prize-giving Magnus Carlsen thanked his girlfriend Synne Christin Larsen for her presence and support. The World Champion also revealed that Timman's Titans, the award-winning book by our reporter that he read during the tournament, had been an inspiration.

half the Top-10 would be present in Douglas.

A surprising novelty in Douglas was that the pairings for the first round were random, and so it came about that Fabiano Caruana would be White against Vladimir Kramnik in Round 1. This was an extremely important game, since both players were battling each other for a place in the Candidates' tournament on the basis of rating points. Caruana's win largely settled the matter. The organizers assured me that the reactions to the random pairing were generally positive. Jon Ludvig Hammer published a column in which he advocated applying those random pairings throughout the tournament, arguing that this was the only way to allow this new approach to have the optimum effect. He has a point, of course, but it seems to me that you would run the risk of someone finishing high in the standings without ever playing a strong opponent. The current system is no less unfortunate, mainly because every pairing is based on rating, which systematically hurts the lower-rated players. This could be mitigated by pairing the players based on Buchholz points from Round 3, but unfortunately this has rarely been done.

The following pairing could have occurred in any system given the considerable rating gap of more than 300 points. IM Alina l'Ami (2286) was the clear underdog, but won an excellent game against Ivan Sokolov (2603).



NOTES BY
Alina l'Ami

Alina l'Ami
Ivan Sokolov
Douglas 2017 (1)
Nimzo-Indian Defence,
Classical Variation

The random pairings of the first round on Isle of Man created waves of debates and opinions. Leaving all the pros and cons aside, for me personally it worked to the nines. I could only be happy. Absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 d6

DOUGLAS

SAVE 10%

A Ready-to-go Package for Ambitious Beginners

"The author explains many ideas, structures and typical manoeuvres using short games that are often played by his pupils. That's why the book is well-suited for young players, but also for older beginners and players with a rating up to 2000 this repertoire is very useful."
Florian Jacobs, Max Euwe Center Amsterdam

"Will definitely improve your rating."
IM Gary Lane, ECF Newletter

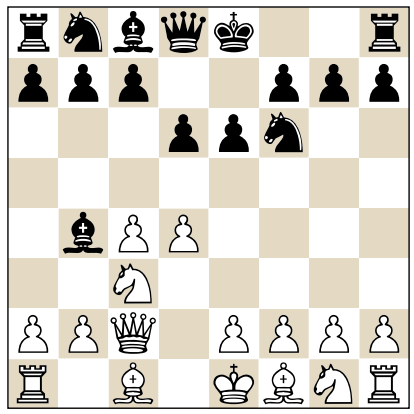
"It's all is about typical aggressive ideas in various opening systems. Moret clearly shows frequent errors and motives, and one can't hardly wait to use this stuff in the next game."
IM Dirk Schuh, Rochade Europa Magazine

"Filled with exciting, tactical lines."
IM Jeremy Silman, Chess.com

"A relatively easy to learn yet reasonably sharp set of lines which could certainly be effective at club level."
Sean Marsh, CHESS Magazine (UK)

My First Repertoire for Black + White
Volume 1 + Volume 2
416 pages for only €34.95

available at your local (chess)bookseller
or at www.newinchess.com



It is not rocket science that the significantly higher-rated player will do anything to keep the game going, even if that means playing sub-optimal lines or choosing risky paths. Obviously, I expected an unorthodox set-up from Ivan Sokolov, and I had prepared quite extensively against all sorts of systems within the Nimzo, which seemed to me to be his most likely choice, since this opening offers a wide range of structures and middlegame possibilities in which the stronger player can claim superior brain power.

4...d6 is not one of the main responses against the 4.♕c2 Nimzo, but it is surely a very tricky and flexible reaction. Why on earth didn't I have a look at it then?!

5.♗d2

I still remembered some ideas, of course, because I didn't start playing chess yesterday, but the annoyance with myself was considerable.

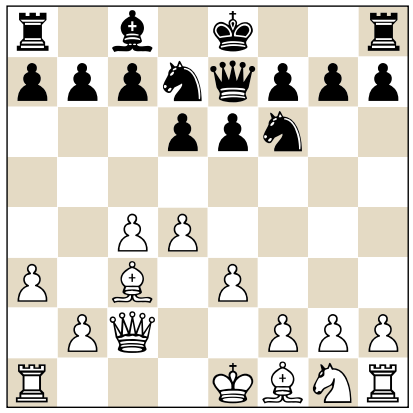
5...♕e7 Quite a provocative and unusual move. Normally, Black would continue his development with ...♘c6, with the same plan in mind: the ...e5-break.

6.e3 ♘bd7

Ivan wants to stay away from any theoretical discussion at all cost. Instead, 6...0-0 7.♗d3 c5 8.♘ge2 d5 was a more natural continuation.

7.a3 Not very precise, but playing the best moves in these slippery structures doesn't come easy to me. Better was 7.♗d3!? 0-0 8.♘ge2, planning to recapture with the knight on c3. White is enjoying quite a comfortable position already.

7...♗xc3 8.♗xc3



8...e5 The most common plan in such structures. However, 8...b6 would have been more flexible: 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.e4 c5 11.♘e2 cxd4 12.♘xd4 0-0, with a position that allows either side to play for a win.

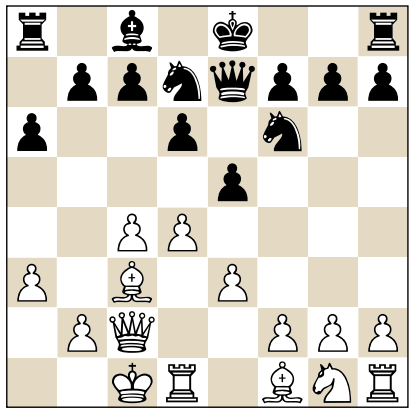
9.0-0-0 I can't suppress a smile☺. It took me a while to play this move, because I was fighting my inner demons and was reluctant to jump into the deep end. Eventually, I convinced myself that this was objectively the best continuation if I wanted to punish Black's opening moves.

9...a6

An alarming signal that Ivan is preparing for a street fight. Nevertheless, it seems a bit slow, as the game proved further on.

The more restrained 9...0-0 10.♘e2 would have been preferable, keeping ...a6 or maybe ...a5 ideas intact.

It is not rocket science that the significantly higher-rated player will do anything to keep the game going,



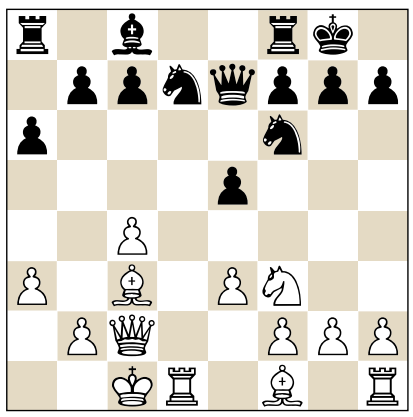
10.dxe5 But I am also not the type of person to sit and wait, unfortunately. This was a hasty decision, aiming for central clarification.

'Keep the tension' was one of the lessons I learned again and again in our Romanian chess clubs. I don't know why it is so difficult to integrate it into my calculation system. After 10.♘e2 0-0 (if 10...b5 then 11.♘g3, with long-term attacking perspectives) 11.♘g3 I believe it is easier to attack than to defend, so I would always choose White.

10...dxe5 11.♘f3 0-0

Returning the favour.

Instead, 11...b6!? is aimed against the g4 plan, and if White continues 12.♘h4 0-0 13.♘f5 ♕e6, I am not sure I can still make good use of my aggressive skills.



12.g4 Less hostile souls would have chosen 12.♖g1 b6, and only now 13.g4, but that's not me ☺.

12...♘xg4 13.♖g1 ♘gf6

In case of 13...f5 White has 14.h3 ♘gf6 15.♘h4, with attacking chances.

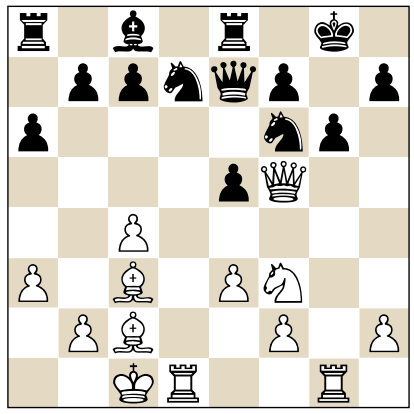
14.♕f5 14.♗h3!? was interesting, but I must confess I didn't even consider it, magnetized as I was by the prospect of letting my queen infiltrate Black's camp.

14...♖e8 15.♗d3 g6 16.♗c2!

Important, otherwise I will get pushed back with nothing to show for the pawn.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

In deep concentration, Alina l'Ami (2286) is weighing her chances against Ivan Sokolov (2603).



16...e4?! I suspect this was a move caused by adrenaline and my being low on time. Ivan was trying to scare me off by forcing tactical blows requiring deep calculation, when time wouldn't be my best friend. But this strategy worked against him.

Instead, 16...♘c5 17.♕xe5 ♕xe5 18.♗xe5 ♗g4! would have kept White's advantage to a minimum.

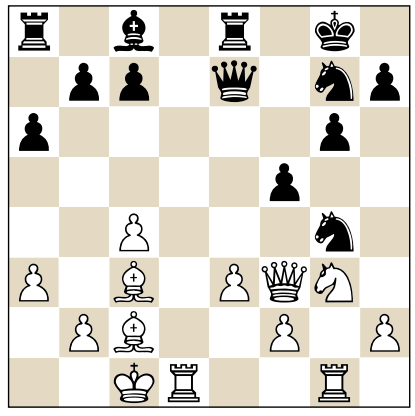
17.♘d2 ♘e5 18.♕f4 ♘eg4

18...♗g4 doesn't work either in view of 19.♗xe5 ♕xe5 20.♖xg4!.

19.♘xe4 A pawn is a pawn ☺.

During the game I didn't see 19.h3!? ♘h5 20.♕xe4 ♘xf2 21.♕d4, which wins as well.

19...♘h5 20.♕f3 f5 21.♘g3 ♘g7

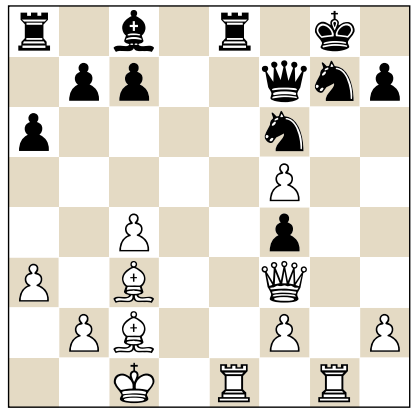


22.e4 I was down on time, but that didn't stop me from searching for the most aggressive moves.

I did feel, though, that there must be a tactic hidden here. I just couldn't work it out in time... 22.♘xf5! gxf5 23.♗xg7 ♕xg7 24.♗xf5 ♗xf5 25.♕xf5, and wins.

22...f4 22...fxe4 23.♘xe4 also looks crushing. **23.♘f5! gxf5 24.exf5 ♘f6 25.♖de1** I remember I was agonizing at this point; which one?! The move I played or 25.♕xf4!?. As it turns out, they were both winning, but over the board the scary thought of possibly letting your big advantage slip away is not a constructive feeling.

25...♕f7

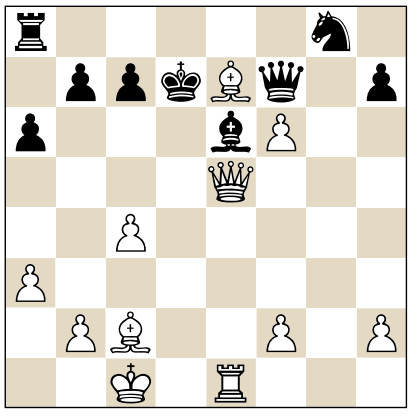


26.♖xg7+ Remaining true to my all-pieces-forward philosophy.

26...♔xg7 27.♕g4+ More precise was 27.♕g2+. **27...♔f8** 27...♕g6 is why the queen was better placed on g2 than on g4, but 28.♕xg6+ hxg6 29.♖xe8 ♔f7 30.♖h8 gxf5 31.♗e5 would still be winning for White.

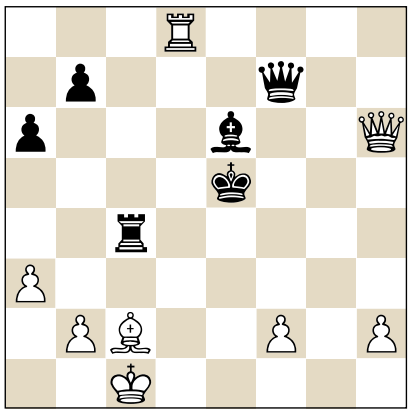
28.♗b4+ ♖e7 29.♕xf4 ♘g8

30.f6 ♔e8 31.♗xe7 ♗e6 32.♕e5 ♔d7



33.♖d1+ I was happy with my play up to this point and with just a little bit more time on the clock I would have finished it off with the obvious 33.♗f5. But time management is not my strongest suit.

33...♔e8 34.♕xc7 ♘xe7 35.fxe7 ♕xe7 36.♗a4+ ♔f8 37.♕f4+ ♕f7 38.♕h6+ ♔e7 39.♕h4+ ♔f8 40.♖d4 ♖c8 41.♗c2 ♖xc4 42.♖d8+ ♔g7 43.♕xh7+ ♔f6 44.♕h6+ ♔e5



45.♕e3+

I agree that it does feel a bit as if White lost the thread here, and that Black can suddenly pray for a miracle if not for objective reasons, then for subjective ones like tiredness or too much respect for one's opponent. But the position was just too good and the shortcuts I made, even though they look like detours, were equally fine from a practical perspective.

During the game I calculated 45.♕h8+ ♕f6 46.f4+ ♖xf4 47.♕h5+ ♗f5 48.♕e2+ ♗e4, but with a blurred vision I just couldn't see the simple 49.♖e8+, and game over.

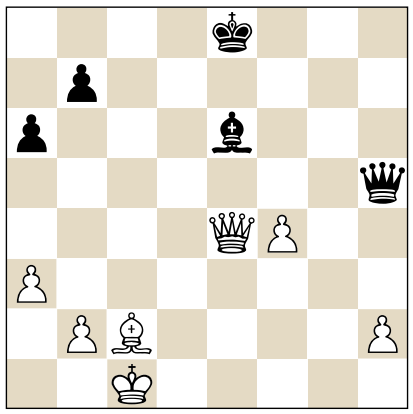
MARIA EMELIANOVA

The random pairings in Round 1 pitted Fabiano Caruana against Vladimir Kramnik. The Russian's loss virtually put an end to his hopes to qualify for the Candidates tournament on rating.

45...♔f6 46.♖d4

When you cannot see things clearly anymore, exchanging pieces and entering a mathematically winning endgame cannot be a bad alternative.

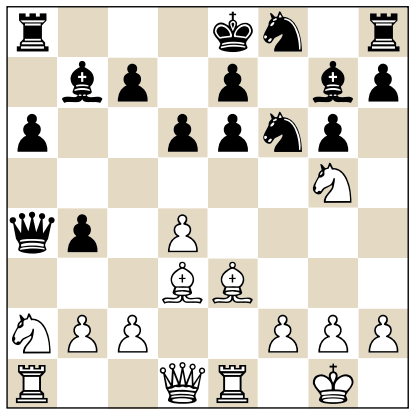
46...♖xd4 47.♕xd4+ ♔e7 48.f4 ♕h5 49.♕b4+ ♔e8 50.♕e4



And Black resigned. Needless to say how happy this game made me feel, even more so when Ivan himself complimented me the following day.

■ ■ ■

It was an important event for Magnus Carlsen, since the World Champion hadn't scored a single classical tournament victory this year, and he was very anxious to finish ahead of the posse. He had arrived in Douglas without his usual entourage of father Henrik and second Peter Heine Nielsen. Instead, he had brought his girlfriend Synne Christin Larsen, a decision that seemed to agree very well with him. His first-round game was a walk-over, but in Round 2 he ran into trouble.



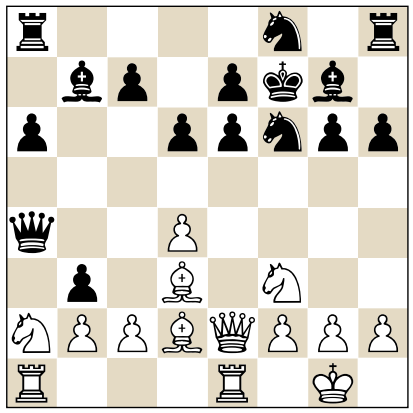
Perelshtein-Carlsen
Douglas 2017 (2)
position after 13...♕xa4

Carlsen had opted for the Modern Defence, a somewhat risky choice. In the diagrammed position, he is two pawns ahead, but the white position is far easier to play.

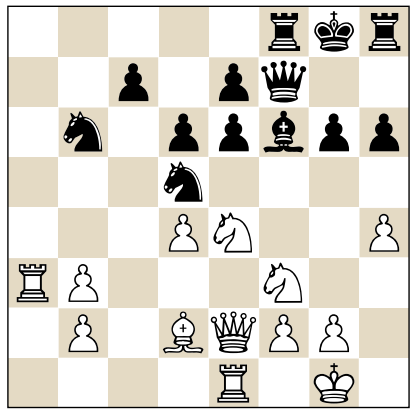
14.♕e2

A strong developing move that prevents the advance of the a-pawn.

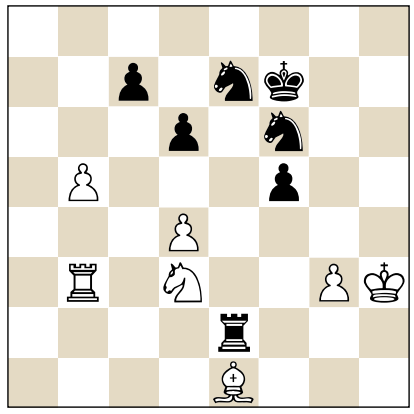
Carlsen now sank into deep thought.
14...h6 This is not the solution of his positional problems. His best option was 14...c5!, intending 15.dxc5 ♕c6 16.f3 dxc5, and White has sufficient compensation, but no more.
15.♘f3 ♔f7 16.♗d2 b3



17.♘c3 Not a bad move, but 17.♘b4, intending to keep his structure intact with 18.c3 after 17...♕d7, seemed stronger, the tactical point being 18...a5 19.♗b5 c6 20.♘d3!, with very strong pressure. This is why the retreat 17...♕e8 is probably better, although it looks very passive.
17...♕d7 18.cxb3 ♖b8 19.♖a3 ♘d5 20.♘e4 ♔g8 21.h4 ♕e8 22.♗xa6 ♗xa6 23.♕xa6 ♗f6 24.♕c4 ♘d7 25.♘c3 ♘7b6 26.♕e2 ♕f7 27.♘e4 ♖f8



28.♘xf6+ White has regained his two pawns and now even wants to go one up himself. But the upshot is that he will hand Black the strategic trumps. Stronger was 28.b4, with continuing pressure.
28...exf6 29.♕xe6 ♕xe6 30.♖xe6 ♔f7 31.♖e1 ♖b8 32.♖c1 ♘c8 33.♘e1 ♘ce7 34.♘d3 g5 35.hxg5 hxg5 36.b4 ♖h4 37.♗c3 ♖bh8 38.g3 ♖h1+ 39.♔g2 ♖8h2+ 40.♔f3 g4+ 41.♔xg4 ♖xc1 42.♘xc1 ♖xf2 43.♗e1 f5+ 44.♔h3 ♖xb2 45.♘d3 ♖c2 46.b5 ♘f6 47.♖b3 ♖e2



48.b6 With superior play, Carlsen has created an advantage. White should now have tried 48.♗a5, with chances of survival. After the text he is lost.
48...cxb6 49.♖xb6 ♘e4 0-1.

Judit Polgar's Chess Set, by DGT

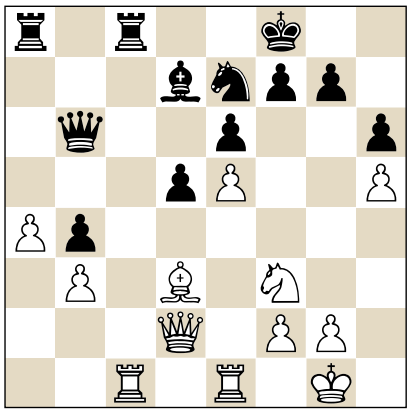
Fine handcrafted set, specially selected by Judit Polgar
A very personal selection of chess pieces
Packed in a beautiful wooden box
Chess board signed 'Polgar Judit – the Queen of Chess'

Judit Polgar chess pieces:
King height 95 mm (3.74") with two extra queens

Judit Polgar Chess Board:
500 x 500 x 13mm (19.7" x 19.7" x .51")
Tournament size squares:
55 x 55 mm (2.17" x 2.17")

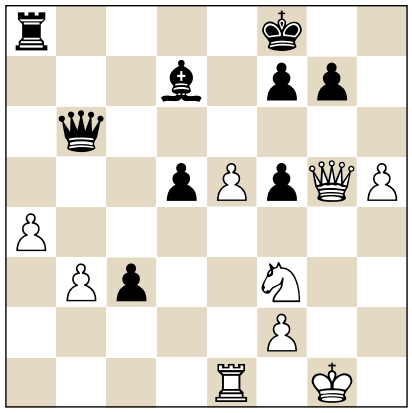
normal price: board €139, pieces €89
special New In Chess price: board + pieces = ~~€228~~ **€199**
www.newinchess.com

In Round 3, Carlsen played against the American promise Jeffery Xiong.

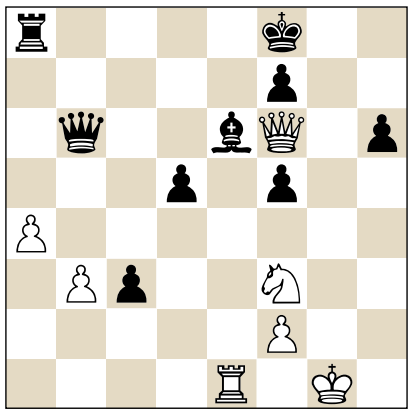


Carlsen-Xiong
Douglas 2017 (3)
position after 23...♔f8

With 24.♗b5 White could have increased his advantage. Carlsen decides to go for an attack. **24.g4 ♖c3!** An adequate reaction. After 25.♖xc3 bxc3 26.♕xc3 ♖c8 Black would recapture the pawn with good play. **25.g5** No choice but to soldier on. **25...hxg5 26.♖xc3 bxc3 27.♕xg5 ♘f5** Again the best continuation. After 27...♘g8 28.♔h1! White would get dangerous attacking chances. **28.♗xf5 exf5**



29.e6! The first of two pawn sacrifices to keep the attack going.
29...♗xe6 30.h6 gxh6 31.♕f6



31...♔g8?? After an excellent defence Xiong makes an incredible mistake: voluntarily sending his king into a mating net. With 31...♕d8! he would have defended successfully, because it would allow him to meet 32.♕xc3 with 32...♔g8, while 32.♖xe6 ♕xf6 33.♖xf6 ♖c8 will lead to an equal rook ending.
32.♕xh6 Of course. The mating net is tightened.
32...♕b4 33.♔h1 1-0.

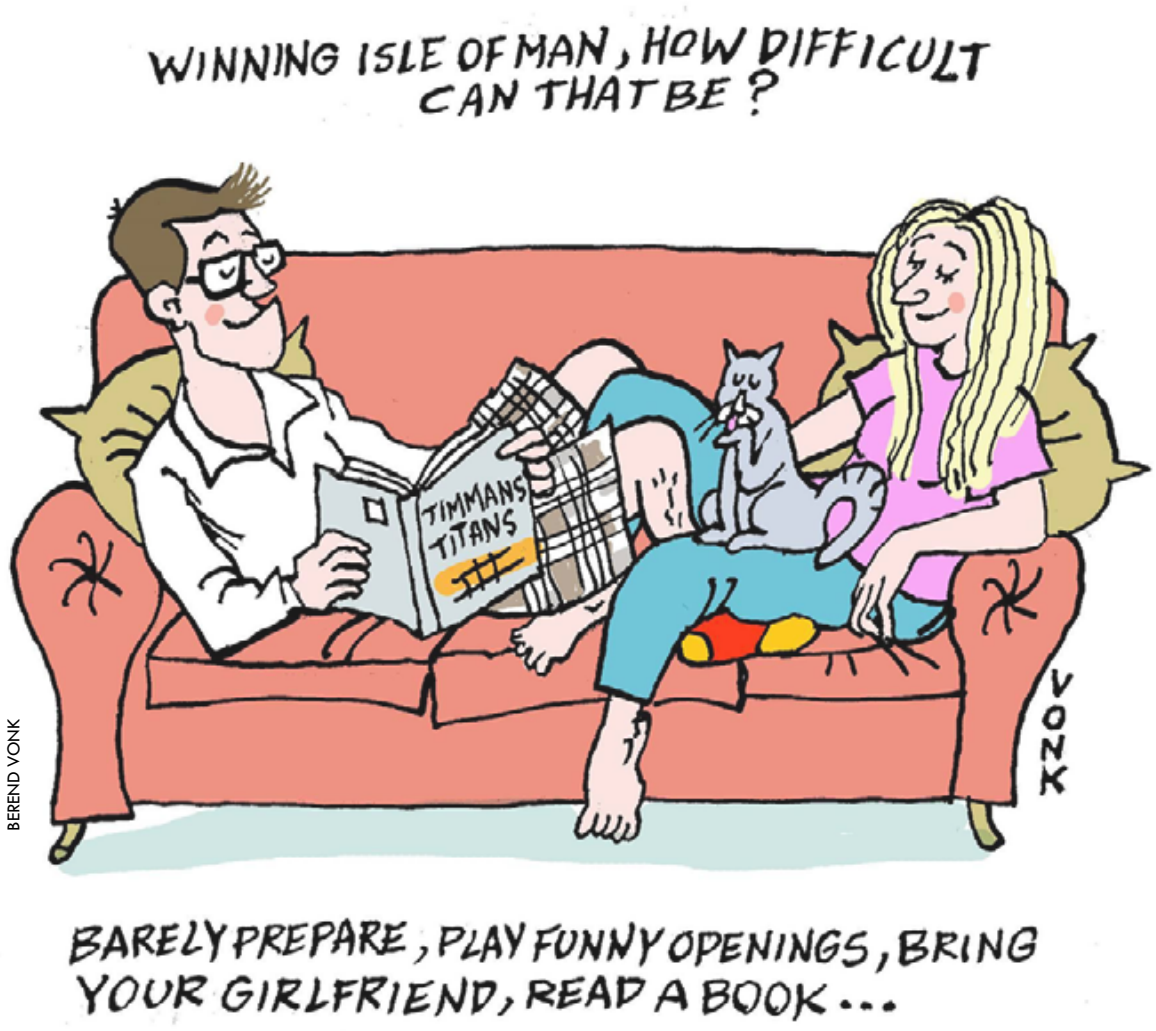
In Round 4, Carlsen experimented again in the opening, going for 1.e4 ♘c6 2.♘f3 d6 against Kasimdzhanov – a system without a clear name that I wouldn't recommend to anyone. (This opening was the subject of an 'SOS' in our previous issue, 2017/6, by Jeroen Bosch, who called it 'a Pirc-Nimzowitsch hybrid'. It may well be that this article inspired the World Champion to play it – ed.) Carlsen did not get into trouble, but didn't manage to create winning chances either.

And so, Carlsen got to share the lead with seven other players on 3½ from 4. In Round 5, he steamrolled Julio Granda, leaving only Pavel Eljanov tied for the lead.

In Round 6, the two leaders met. A journalist asked Eljanov about their score against each other. It was a painful moment, but Eljanov reacted politely: 0-5 for me, he said. Carlsen was also friendly when quizzed about that score, saying that Eljanov always played to win, especially with White. He could also have said that he was Eljanov's angstgegner.

Pavel Eljanov
Magnus Carlsen
Douglas 2017 (6)
Owen Defence

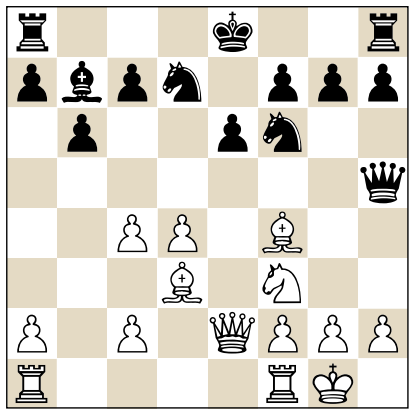
1.♘f3 b6
The third experiment! After the game a photograph was published of Carlsen in a lively discussion with Scheinberg. The sponsor is said to have asked the World Champion whether 1...b6 was really a playable


WINNING ISLE OF MAN, HOW DIFFICULT CAN THAT BE?
TIMMANS TITANS
VONK
BARELY PREPARE, PLAY FUNNY OPENINGS, BRING YOUR GIRLFRIEND, READ A BOOK...

BERND VONK

option. We don't know Carlsen's reply. He could have said that the Owen Defence was a better option against 1.♘f3 than against 1.d4 or 1.e4. But it turned out to have been an excellent choice against someone who sees you as his angstgegner.

2.e4 ♗b7 3.♘c3 e6 4.d4 ♗b4 5.♗d3 ♘f6 6.♕e2 d5 7.exd5 ♕xd5 8.0-0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♘bd7 10.c4 ♕h5 11.♗f4

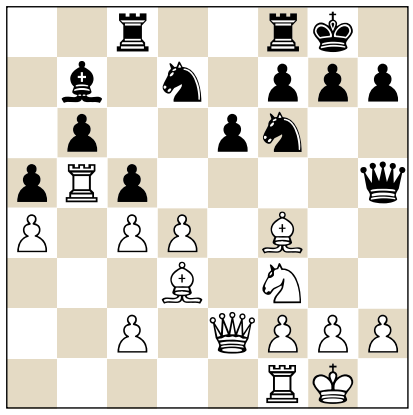


11...♖c8 The first new move. Earlier games had seen 11...c5.

12.a4 a5 13.♖ab1

After the game Carlsen observed that White's best bet here would have been 13.♘d2, with some little endgame advantage.

13...0-0 14.♖b5 c5



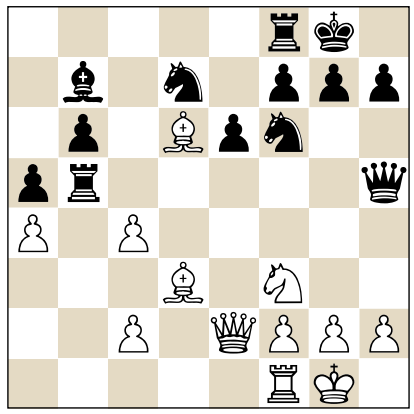
15.dxc5

After this anti-positional exchange White goes downhill strategically. He could have made an interesting exchange sacrifice: 15.c3 ♗c6 16.♖fb1!. If Black had accepted it, he would have straitjacketed himself, especially in view of his knights' limited elbow-room. White has sufficient compensation.

15...♖xc5 16.♗d6 ♖xb5

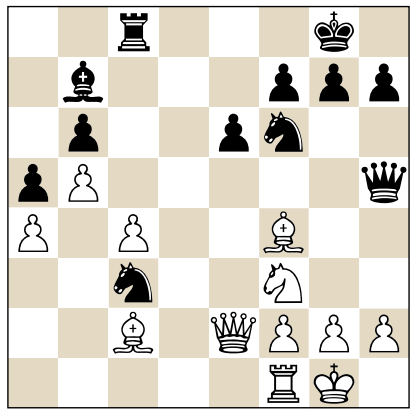
MARIA EMELIANOVA

With another opening experiment (1.♘f3 b6) Magnus Carlsen took the sole lead in Round 6, increasing his overall score against Pavel Eljanov to a Fischeresque 6-0.



17.cxb5 The computer assesses the position after 17.axb5 as equal, but I daresay that everyone would prefer to play this position as Black.

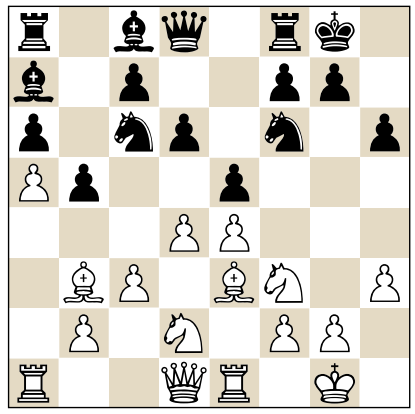
17...♖c8 18.c4 ♘c5 19.♗c2 ♘ce4 20.♗f4 White's only chance was 20.♗e5. After 20...♘g5 21.♘d4 ♕xe2 22.♘xe2 ♖xc4 23.♖c1 he has drawing chances. **20...♘c3**



After only 20 moves Black is already winning. Carlsen rounds things off expertly.

21.♕d3 ♕g4 22.♗e5 ♕xc4 23.♕xc4 ♖xc4 24.♗d3 ♖c8 25.♖a1 ♘fd5 26.♘d2 f6 27.♗d6 ♘b4 28.♗c4 ♗d5 29.♗f1 ♘ba2 White resigned.

Carlsen was now topping the standings and never relinquished his lead. Meanwhile, two other heavyweights were snapping at his heels: Caruana and Nakamura. The former won a game in Round 7 that was almost entirely based on home analysis.



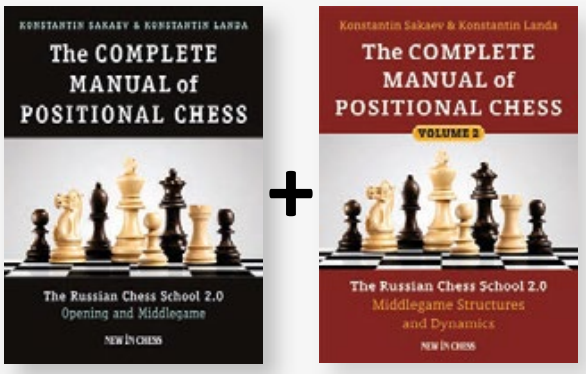
Caruana-Jones
Douglas 2017 (7)
position after 14.♘bd2

14...exd4

Gawain Jones had played this earlier. The alternative is 14...♖e8, a move that Caruana had earlier played himself as Black and that Carlsen would play against him again in the next round.

DOUGLAS

SAVE 10%


KONSTANTIN SAKAEV & KONSTANTIN LANDA
The COMPLETE MANUAL of POSITIONAL CHESS
The Russian Chess School 2.0
Opening and Middlegame
NEW IN CHESS
Konstantin Sakaev & Konstantin Landa
The COMPLETE MANUAL of POSITIONAL CHESS
VOLUME 2
The Russian Chess School 2.0
Middlegame Structures and Dynamics
NEW IN CHESS

Probably the most thorough grounding in the history of teaching chess

"Excellent, you can't get better than the Russian School of Chess."
Grandmaster Daniel King

"A complete course for both the chess trainer and the keen pupil."
CHESS Magazine (UK)

"Sakaev and Landa write in a clear and structured way. The verbal comments are exceptionally good."
IM Jeroen Bosch, Schaakmagazine

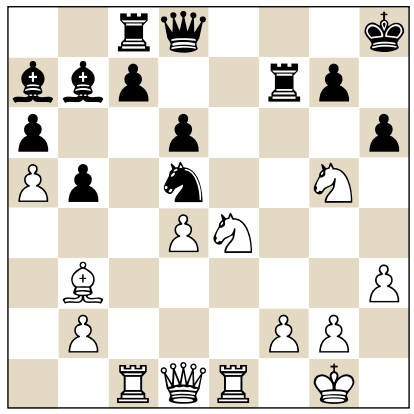
"A thorough and convincing anthology."
Florian Jacobs, Max Euwe Center, Amsterdam

"When you have completed the entire course you should be able to assess accurately the majority of chess positions with which you are confronted."
British Chess Magazine

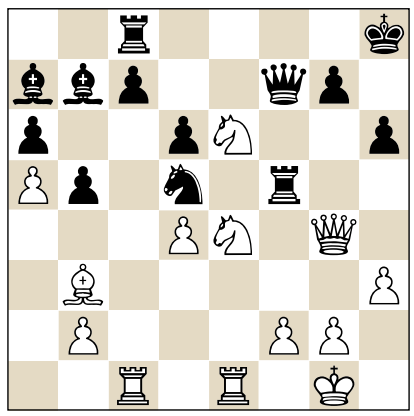
The Complete Manual of Positional Chess
Volume 1 + Volume 2
688 pages for only € 49.95

available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com

15.cxd4 ♘b4 16.e5!
Definitely the strongest advance. In Grandelius-Jones, Linares 2017, White had played 16.d5 without getting anywhere.
Jones was following a video analysis by Peter Svidler, who considered the black position playable.
16...♘fd5 17.♘e4 ♘xe3 18.♖xe3 ♗b7 19.e6 ♘d5 20.exf7+ ♔h8 21.♖e1 ♖xf7 22.♖c1 ♖c8 23.♘fg5!
Caruana continued to play fast. He was also familiar with Svidler's analyses and had found an improvement. Black is probably already lost.



23...♖f5 After a long think Jones fails to go for the most critical move. Caruana's home analysis was mainly based on 23...♖e7, when White continues with 24.♕g4 ♕e8 25.♔h2!. This quiet king move is extremely subtle. Black has no useful moves. After 25...♖d8 26.♕f5! g6 27.♕g4 he slowly finds himself in a curious kind of zugzwang. The g5-knight remains under attack.
24.♘e6 Winning.
24...♕d7 25.♕g4 ♕f7



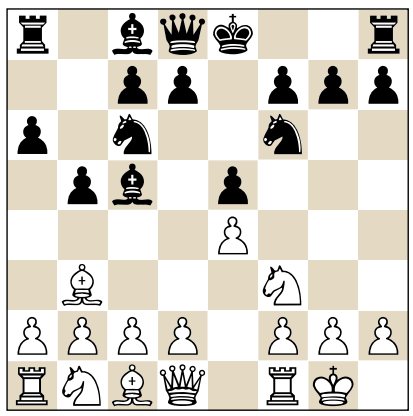
26.♖xc7! The most convincing approach. **26...♖xc7 27.♘xd6 ♖xf2 28.♘xc7 ♕f6 29.♘xd5 ♕xd4 30.♕xd4 ♗xd4 31.♖e4 ♗a7 32.♘b6** Black resigned.

Round 8 saw the clash between Caruana and Carlsen. Here it is with notes by Carlsen's second Peter Heine Nielsen.

NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

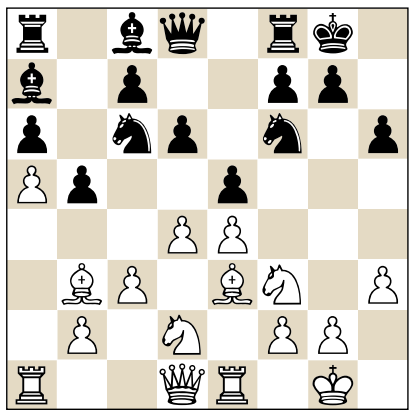
Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Douglas 2017 (8)
Ruy Lopez

While many players had planned their 'exit-strategy' from the World Cup with the Isle of Man's organizers in advance, Magnus wanted to quickly wash away the unexpected loss against Bu Xiangzhi in Tbilisi, and an open tournament with most of the world's elite present seemed like an excellent opportunity.
The early rounds saw the expected scares with his risk-taking and unusual openings, but in the end he was rewarded by leading the field, half a half point ahead of his closest pursuers, before this game in the penultimate round.
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗c5



Magnus played the Møller Defence in the crucial Game 9 of the match in New York, and had to pull off a spectacular save after getting into trouble

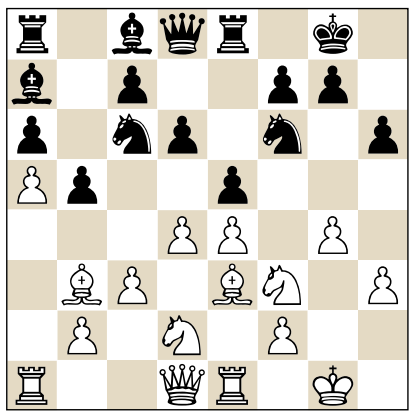
out of the opening. So he had parked the line until this game.
7.c3 d6 8.a4 ♖b8 9.d4 ♗b6 10.a5 ♗a7 11.h3 0-0 12.♗e3 ♖a8 13.♖e1 h6 14.♘bd2



As you have just seen in Jan Timman's account, Caruana had had this exact position the day before, also with the white pieces, against Gawain Jones, who preferred 14...exd4 15.cxd4 ♘b4. From a positional point of view, Black is doing fine, but Fabiano launched a well-prepared attack with 16.e5! and won an excellent game.

14...♖e8

Curiously, Magnus prefers the move Caruana himself played against Karjakin in 2013! That game continued with the pawn sacrifice 15.♘f1, but the American had prepared an even more cunning idea:
15.g4!?



The idea of attacking a pawn on h6 with g4 is not exactly new, but ideally White would prefer a rook and not his king on g1! Here, however, White's control of the centre means that it is difficult for Black to launch an attack against White's now somewhat weakened king. And more pressingly, it is not easy to see how White develops next. There is no point in hiding that the move took the World Champion by surprise, as he now thought for more than half an hour to come up with a common-sense reply.

15...♕e7?! The computer indicates two ways for Black:

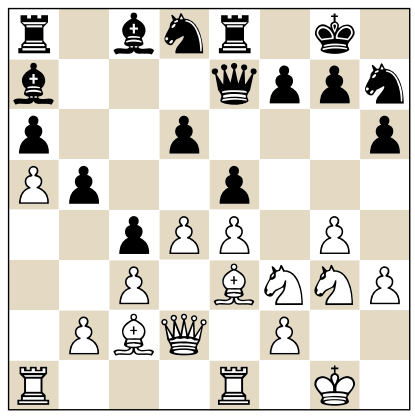
A) 15...exd4 16.cxd4 ♘b4 in the style of Jones is logical, but now, with the rook on e8, 17.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18.♕b3+ is possible, although 18...♘bd5 19.exd5 ♗b7 20.♕d3 ♕d7!, as indicated by the computers, seems to hold. 17.g5!? also deserves attention, with wild tactics emerging after 17...c5! 18.e5!? ♘fd5 19.♘e4, with a complete mess, for which Caruana certainly would be prepared.

B) 15...♕d7!? is very interesting, combining defending the knight on c6 (and thus intending 16...exd4 17.cxd4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♖xe4, as 19.♗d5 is not a threat against c6) with ...♘xg4 motifs cropping up. White can try to get an advantage with 16.g5!?, but Black can still play 16...exd4 17.cxd4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♖xe4 19.♗d5, and while 19...♖e8 now loses to both 20.gxh6 or 20.g6, 19...♕xh3! forces a draw, as on 20.♗xe4 ♕g4+ both 21.♔f1 and 21.♔h1 leave White's king exposed after 21...♕xe4, and 21.♔h2 ♕h5+ is a perpetual. White can play it slow with 16.♕c2, but then 16...♘d8 is a good way to regroup.

16.♘f1!

A very strong move, leaving Black in a strategically very difficult position. Tactically, the problem is that 16...exd4 17.cxd4 ♘xe4 loses a piece to 18.d5! ♗xe3 19.♖xe3 ♘e5 20.♘xe5 ♕xe5 21.f3, which means that Black has to take it slow.

16...♘d8 17.♘g3 c5 18.♕d2 c4 19.♗c2 ♘h7



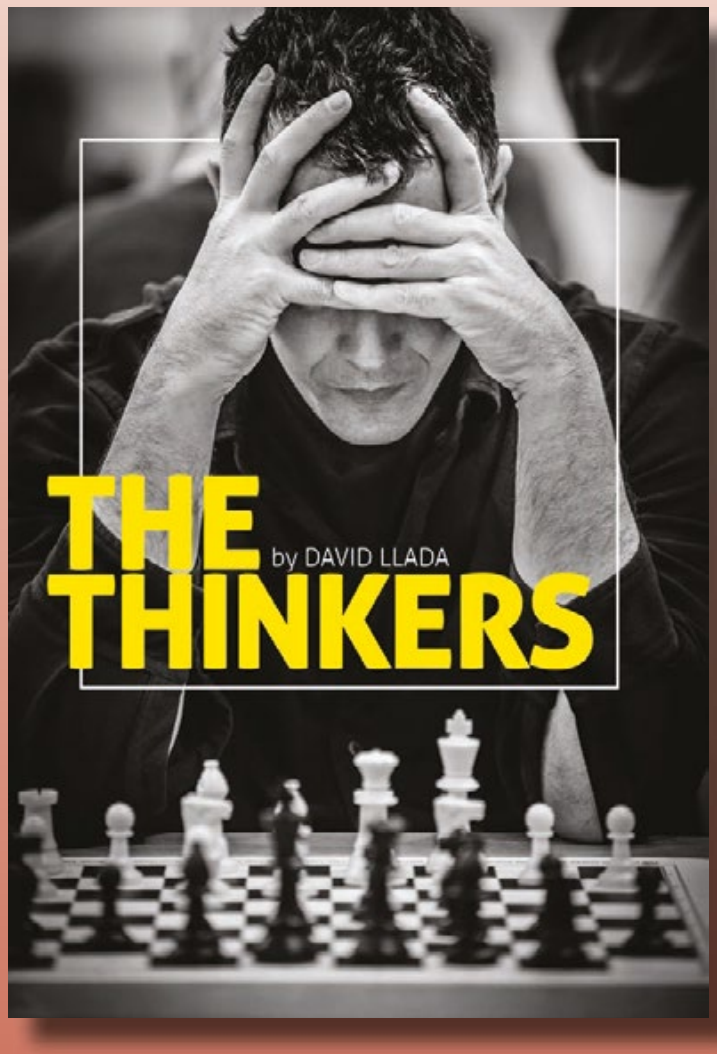
20.b4 An interesting moment. The computers at first indicate that 20.b3! is the move, and that 20.b4 somewhat lets White off the hook.

But obviously the players both seemed to think that sealing off the queenside was to White's advantage, and after a while the machine also agrees that

ALINA L'AMI

A cunning opening idea got Fabiano Caruana a promising game against Magnus Carlsen, but when the American wavered, the World Champion decidedly took over to score a key victory.

The most beautiful chess book ever



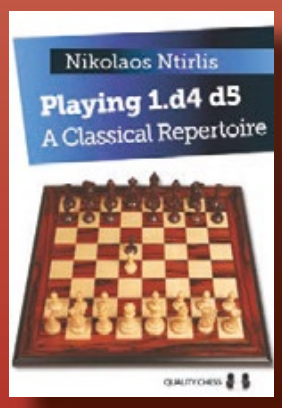
Hardback only – Out Nov 1st

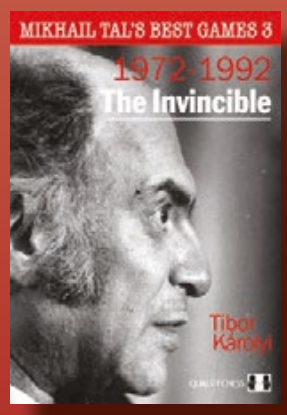
The Thinkers is a visual tribute to the game of chess, showcasing the emotions, exertions and desires of the players, and conveying the mental intensity only chess can command. Included are some of the most iconic portraits of today's stars, as well as emotive shots of ordinary players from all over the world, with photos taken over the last five years in venues such as Mombasa, London, Chennai, Las Vegas, Baku and Sao Paulo.

David Llada's photographs capture the full richness and drama of the game, making this the most visually stunning book ever devoted to chess.

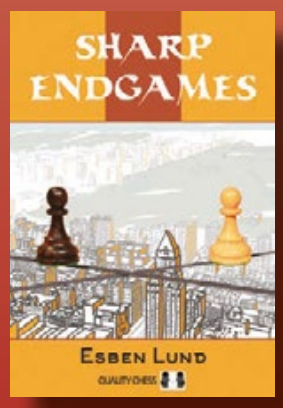
- 208 pages of the finest Fedrigoni paper
- 111 photographs in black-and-white, 66 in full colour, with 16 breathtaking double spreads

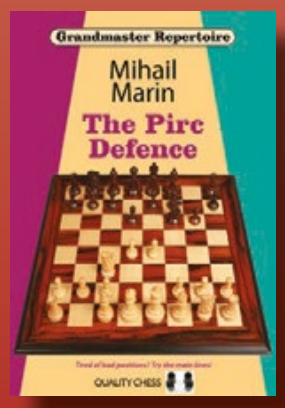
Just out





Out Nov 1st



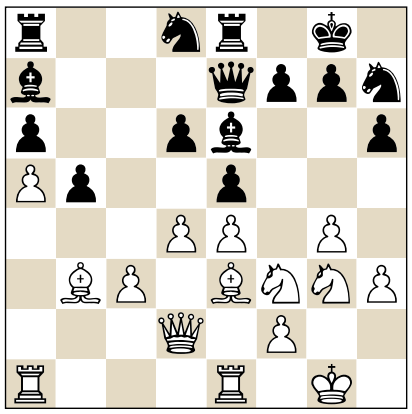


For more information, please go to

QUALITYCHESS.COM

after 20...♕f6!? 21.♔g2 ♘e6, 22.h4! still gives White a considerable advantage, since Black's intended 22...♘hg5 is prevented.

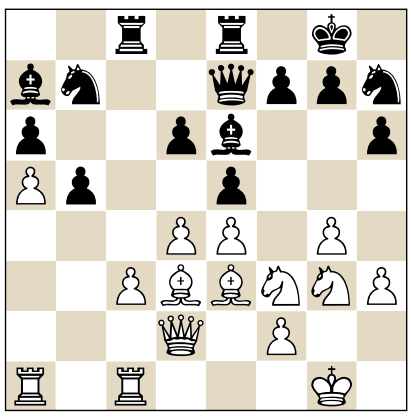
20...cxb3 21.♗xb3 ♗e6



Up to this point, Caruana has given a powerful performance, but things are about to take a dramatic turn. After 22.♘f5!, the reply 22...♕c7 may look as if White has failed to make progress, but 23.♗d5! leaves him close to strategically winning: 23...♗xd5 24.exd5 f6 loses tactically to 25.♗xh6, since White's attack will be unstoppable after 25...gxh6 26.♕xh6 ♔h8 27.g5 fxg5 28.♘xd6.

23...♖c8 24.♖ac1 also leaves Black stuck for moves, and biting the bullet and taking on f5, for example as early as on move 22, means that White will have a basically unstoppable attack down the g-file.

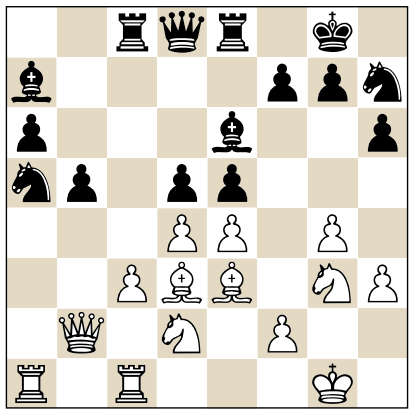
22.♗c2? ♖c8 23.♗d3 ♘b7 24.♖ec1 Not managing to follow through with his aggressive intentions, Caruana has shifted to a defensive set-up, keeping a5 and c3 protected, and planning d5 and c4, should Black place his queen on the obvious square c7. But Black has another way of pressurizing the a-pawn:



24...♕d8!

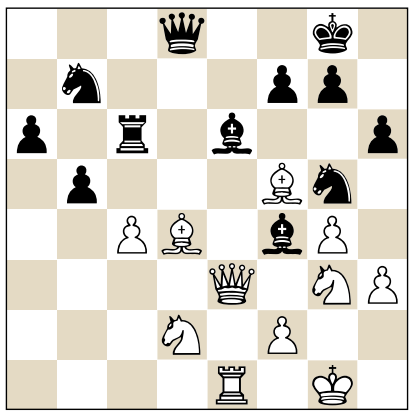
Short of time, White now collapses. 25.d5! still was the best move, as after 25...♗xe3 26.♕xe3 ♗d7 27.c4! ♘xa5 28.cxb5 ♖xc1+ 29.♖xc1 axb5 30.♕a7! it seems like Black's best is 30...♘b3, when White gets the pawn back with 31.♖b1 ♘c5 32.♗xb5 and should be able to save the draw. In time-pressure, however, Caruana goes astray:

25.♕b2 ♘xa5 26.♘d2 d5!



Not only is Black a pawn up, but the white centre is collapsing as well.

27.♖e1 ♗b8 28.exd5 ♗xd5 29.♗f5 ♖c6 30.♕a3 ♘b7 31.♖ad1 exd4 32.♗xd4 ♘g5 33.c4 ♖xe1+ 34.♖xe1 ♗e6 35.♕e3 ♗f4!



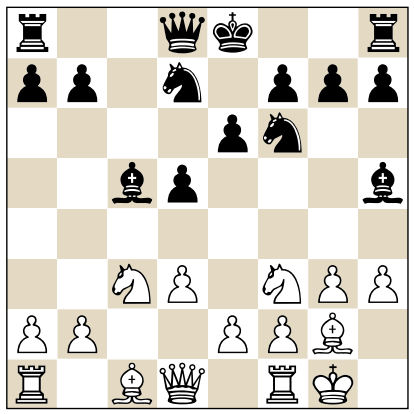
The bishop that White had gone to such lengths to exclude from the game has returned efficiently and fittingly delivers the final blow. As 36.♕xf4 loses to 36...♘xh3+ and 36.♕e2 ♗xd2 37.♕xd2 to 37...♘f3+, Caruana resigned.

■ ■ ■

Going into the final round, Carlsen had a half-point lead on Nakamura, and he would be White in their personal encounter. He had indicated that his main concern was to keep the gates closed, being determined to write the tournament to his name and not willing to take any risks. Nakamura was in great form, winning Rounds 7 and 8. I immensely liked his win against Wagner.

Dennis Wagner
Hikaru Nakamura
Douglas 2017 (7)
Réti Opening, King's Indian Attack

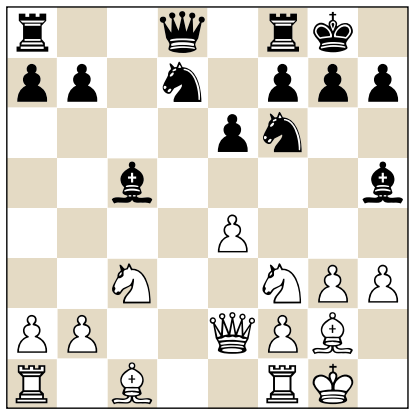
1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 ♗g4 3.♗g2 c6 4.c4 e6 5.0-0 ♘d7 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♘c3 ♘gf6 8.d3 ♗c5 9.h3 ♗h5



10.e4 A strange moment for this advance. The black bishop on c5 is now excellently positioned. The standard move here is 10.♗f4, with good chances of an opening advantage.

10...dxe4 Of course. The exchange guarantees that the a7-g1 diagonal will remain open.

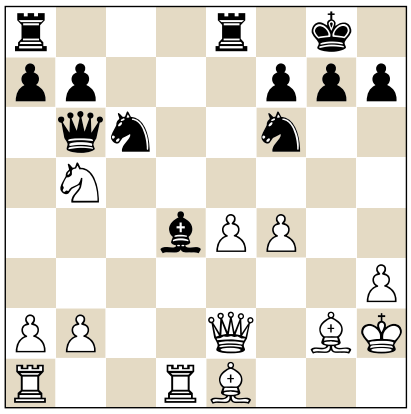
11.dxe4 0-0 12.♕e2



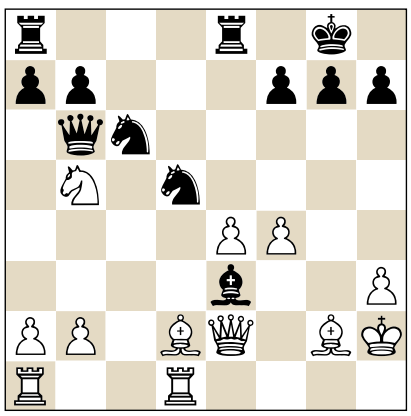
12...♗xf3!

Excellent thinking. Nakamura gives up the bishop pair in order to establish optimum central control.

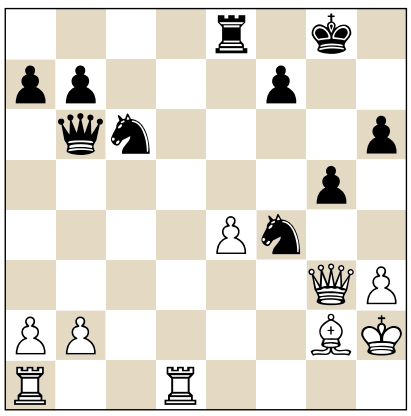
13.♗xf3 ♘e5 14.♖d1 ♕b6 15.♗g2 ♗d4 16.♗d2 ♖fd8 17.♗e1 ♘c6 18.♔h2 e5 19.f4 ♖e8 20.♘b5 exf4 21.gxf4



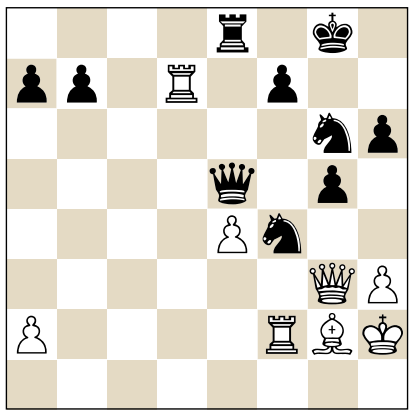
21...♗e3!
A well thought-out way to wrest the initiative.
22.♗d2 ♘d5



The elegant point of the previous move; but it means that Black is prepared to sacrifice an exchange for positional compensation.
23.♘d6 ♗xf4+ 24.♗xf4 ♘xf4 25.♕f3 g5 26.♘xe8 ♖xe8 27.♕g3 h6



This is the position Nakamura had been aiming for. His knights are very strong, and White will have to play very accurately to maintain the balance.
28.♖d2? Now the Black initiative will get too strong. The move called for was 28.♕c3, intending to keep the second knight from square c4.
28...♘e5 29.♖ad1 ♘c4 30.♖d7 ♕xb2 31.♖f1 ♘e5 32.♖d6 ♘eg6 33.♖f2 ♕e5 34.♖d7



34...♖c8! Black deploys his rook. He needn't worry about his queenside pawns.
35.♖xb7 h5
Good enough, but with 35...♖c3 Black could have won more convincingly, e.g. 36.♖b5 ♕d4 37.♗f3 ♘h4, and the white position collapses.
36.♔h1 ♖c3 37.♖f3 ♖c2 38.♖f2 ♖c3 39.♖f3 h4 40.♕e1 ♖c2
White resigned.

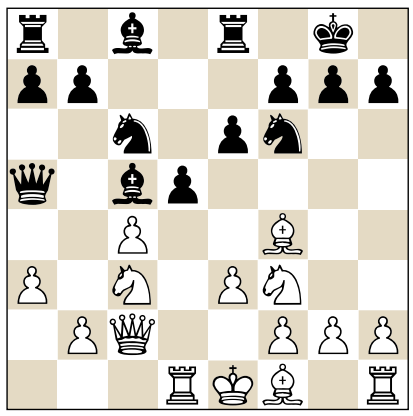
MARIA EMELIANOVA

With a contented smile Magnus Carlsen stops the clock, as Hikaru Nakamura understands that he has to take the draw because he cannot sidestep a repetition of moves.

It was not to be expected that the game between Carlsen and Nakamura would be a high point of the event. I myself was expecting a lacklustre fight with many early exchanges. But it turned out to be a short and explosive encounter that ended in a draw by repetition. Everything in it was more or less familiar, but there's still something to be said about it.

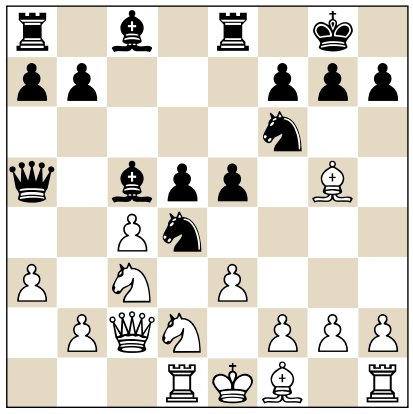
Magnus Carlsen
Hikaru Nakamura
Douglas 2017 (9)
Queen's Gambit Declined
Blackburne Variation

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.a3 ♘c6 9.♕c2 ♕a5 10.♖d1 ♖e8



This move was introduced by Karpov in his 21st match game against Kortchnoi, Baguio 1978. It looks like a harmless little move, but it's the run-up to a sharp knight sacrifice. Kortchnoi managed to more or less refute the idea over the board, after which the rook move fell into disuse – until two years ago, when it was rehabilitated in the game Tarjan-Zumsande, also in Douglas. Nakamura had seen that game and decide to add the black system to his repertoire.

11.♘d2 e5 12.♗g5 ♘d4



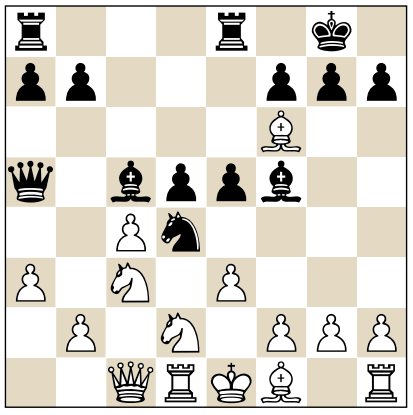
This is the position in question. White cannot really accept the knight sacrifice. Kortchnoi played 13.♕b1, and was better after 13...♗f5 14.♗d3 e4 15.♗c2. The retreat 15.♗f1 might have been even stronger. Zumsande's improvement on Black's play was 14...♗xd3 15.♕xd3 ♘e4!, with sufficient counterplay. This is also how Nakamura wanted to play against Karjakin in Bilbao last year, but after a long think the Russian decided to move his queen to a different square. After 13.♕a4 ♕xa4 14.♘xa4 ♘c2+ 15.♔e2 ♘d4+ the game ended in a draw by repetition. Black could have continued with 14...♗e7, although the endgame does not offer him any prospects; the position is roughly equal.

Carlsen goes for a third queen move that scuppers all Black's chances to play for a win.

13.♕c1

By far the best choice if you have no winning aspirations.

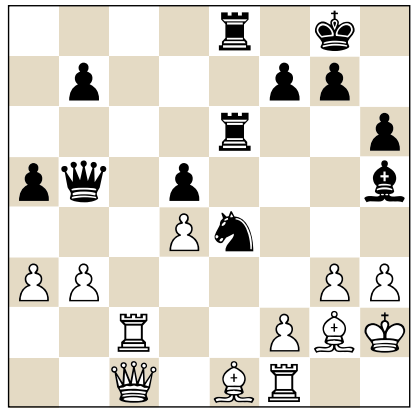
13...♗f5 14.♗xf6



Now Black will have to go for perpetual check. After 14...gxf6 15.b4 White would be winning.

14...♘c2+ 15.♔e2 ♘d4+ 16.♔e1 ♘c2+ 17.♔e2 ♘d4+ 18.♔e1 ♘c2+ Here a draw was agreed, which, strictly speaking, was breaking the rules, because draw offers before move 30 were prohibited, and there has been no repetition yet: in the position after the first check, the white king could still castle. Now you could argue that this possibility has already been eliminated by the check itself, but the rules are not normally interpreted like this. The arbiter could have asked Carlsen to claim the draw – after 19.♔e2 it would indeed be three times the same position – but understandably he decided not to press the issue.

And so the World Champion had won the £50,000 first prize, a cheque for which was handed to him by Scheinberg during the closing ceremony. Anand managed to draw level with Nakamura by beating Hou Yifan in the final round. They shared second prize and received a cheque of £18,750. This would have been an attractive first prize in many tournaments! The rest of the prizes were shared by a group of nine players that had finished on 6½ points. Kramnik was one of them. After his first-round defeat against Caruana things refused to pick up for him for several rounds. He did win his second game quite easily, but after that things went wrong again. You wouldn't have expected this at the start of his game in Round 3, because he had built up a superior position against my contemporary James Tarjan. I was unable to follow the next phase of their game, because I was involved in a sharp battle with Gelfand. When our game finished in a draw, I was curious to see if Kramnik had managed to increase his advantage, but to my amazement I saw that he was utterly lost. Back in my hotel room, I saw what kind of drama had unfolded.

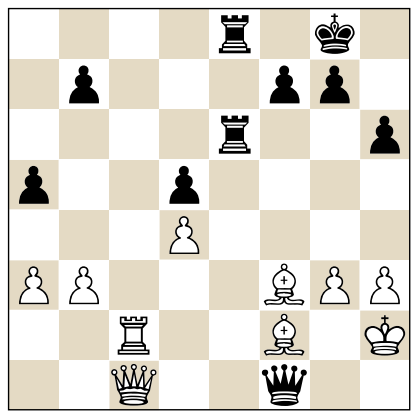


Tarjan-Kramnik
Douglas 2017 (3)
position after 30.exd4

Black has a large advantage. A good move would be 30...b6, but Kramnik wanted to swap bishops via a tactical turn, overlooking a simple detail.

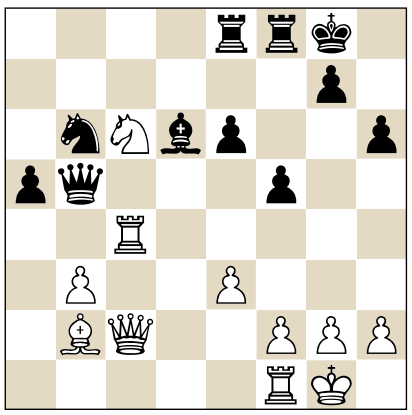
30...♗f3? 31.♗xf3 Of course. After 31...♕xf1 32.♗e2 the black queen would be caught. **31...♘xg3?** Now it's a shambles. He should have captured on f1 regardless, and after 31...♕xf1 32.♗e2 ♘xg3! 33.♗xf1 ♘xf1+ 34.♔g2 ♖xe1 35.♕f4 ♖8e6! the draw is unavoidable.

32.fxg3 ♕xf1 33.♗f2



Winning. Black doesn't stand a chance against the invincible bishop pair (1-0, 56).

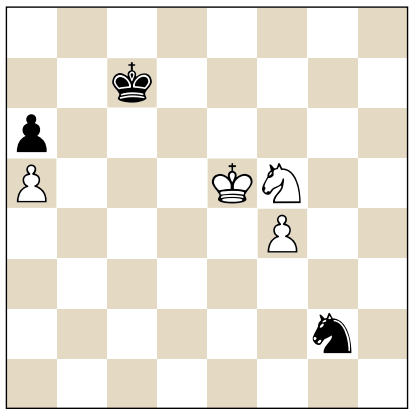
An incredible hallucination on Kramnik's part. It reminded me of another blunder of Kramnik's three years ago in the Candidates tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk.



Kramnik-Svidler
Khanty-Mansiysk 2014
position after 31...♘b6

White will be slightly better if he goes 32.♘d4, but he played **32.♖d4?? ♗xh2+ 33.♔xh2 ♕xf1** And Black was winning (0-1, 39).

Tarjan seemed a bit emotional when he explained, in an interview for the official website, what Kramnik had overlooked, but otherwise he remained his usual modest self. When I asked him to analyse his game against Kramnik for our magazine, he seemed embarrassed. 'What is there to say?', he said with a shrug. I saw his point and decided not to insist. Tarjan played a number of excellent games in Douglas, and his win against Kramnik was more of a lucky hit. He did, however, draw my attention to the very interesting final phase of his game in the previous round against Erwin l'Ami.



E. l'Ami-Tarjan
Douglas 2017 (2)
position after 77.♘xf5

Not much is going on in this knight ending. Black can safely go 77...♔c6, because after 78.♘d4+ ♔c5 79.f5 he can still sacrifice his knight with 79...♘e3 80.f6 ♘g4+. But Tarjan decide to sacrifice it immediately.

ALINA L'AMI

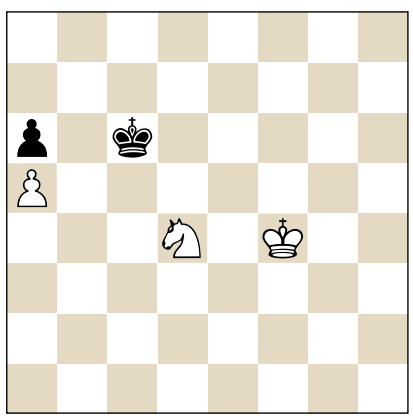
At 65, American GM Jim Tarjan is fully enjoying his return to chess, but was typically modest about his sensational win against Vladimir Kramnik.

Douglas 2017

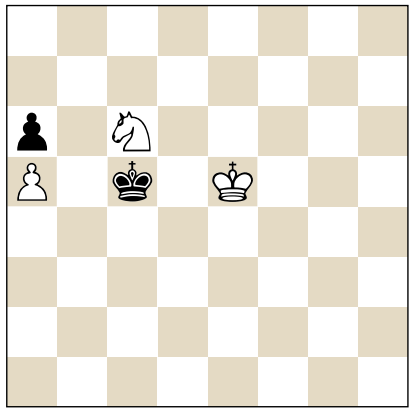
1	**Magnus Carlsen**	NOR 2827	7½	2903
2	**Vishy Anand**	IND 2794	7	2806
3	**Hikaru Nakamura**	USA 2781	7	2831
4	**Vladimir Kramnik**	RUS 2803	6½	2660
5	**Fabiano Caruana**	USA 2799	6½	2831
6	**Michael Adams**	ENG 2738	6½	2719
7	**Pavel Eljanov**	UKR 2734	6½	2749
8	**Vidit Gujrathi**	IND 2702	6½	2764
9	**Emil Sutovsky**	ISR 2683	6½	2712
10	**Richard Rapport**	HUN 2675	6½	2732
11	**Alexei Shirov**	LAT 2630	6½	2703
12	**S. Dhopade Swapnil**	IND 2532	6½	2768
13	**Maxim Rodshtein**	ISR 2695	6	2616
14	**Peter Leko**	HUN 2679	6	2646
15	**Rustam Kasimdzhanov**	UZB 2676	6	2707
16	**Sergei Movsesian**	ARM 2671	6	2622
17	**Hou Yifan**	CHN 2670	6	2687
18	**Julio Granda Zuniga**	PER 2653	6	2573
19	**Gabriel Sargissian**	ARM 2652	6	2624
20	**Erwin l'Ami**	NED 2611	6	2708
21	**Falko Bindrich**	GER 2598	6	2666
22	**Narayanan Sunilduth Lyna**	IND 2568	6	2704
23	**Aleksandr Lenderman**	USA 2565	6	2768
24	**Dennis Wagner**	GER 2564	6	2672
25	**Paco Vallejo**	ESP 2716	5½	2631
26	**Arkadij Naiditsch**	AZE 2702	5½	2644
27	**David Howell**	ENG 2701	5½	2589
28	**Nigel Short**	ENG 2698	5½	2589
29	**Adhiban Baskaran**	IND 2670	5½	2564
30	**Gawain Jones**	ENG 2668	5½	2596
31	**Varuzhan Akobian**	USA 2662	5½	2541
32	**Laurent Fressinet**	FRA 2657	5½	2660
33	**Nils Grandelius**	SWE 2653	5½	2652
34	**Jeffery Xiong**	USA 2633	5½	2592
35	**Benjamin Bok**	NED 2620	5½	2552
36	**Sebastian Bogner**	SUI 2599	5½	2545
37	**Niclas Huschenbeth**	GER 2596	5½	2593
38	**Pavel Tregubov**	RUS 2589	5½	2446
39	**Aryan Tari**	NOR 2588	5½	2633
40	**Chithambaram VR Aravindh**	IND 2573	5½	2551
41	**Alan Pichot**	ARG 2565	5½	2575
42	**Bogdan-Daniel Deac**	ROU 2559	5½	2578
43	**Alexander Donchenko**	GER 2559	5½	2613
44	**Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa**	IND 2500	5½	2531
45	**Michael William Brown**	USA 2499	5½	2613
46	**James Tarjan**	USA 2412	5½	2671
47	**Deimante Cornette**	LTU 2404	5½	2467
48	**Boris Gelfand**	ISR 2737	5	2507
49	**Alexander Riazantsev**	RUS 2666	5	2539
50	**S.P. Sethuraman**	IND 2617	5	2661

160 players, 9 rounds

77...♘xf4 There is nothing wrong with this if Black continues to play accurately. **78.♔xf4 ♔c6 79.♘d4+**



79...♔c5? An instructive error. Black wants to keep his king close to the white a-pawn, but in doing so allows the white king to support the knight. The only way to the draw was 79...♔d5. This demonstrates the importance of centralization, even far into the endgame.
80.♔e5 ♔b4 81.♘c6+ ♔c5



82.♘d4 L'Ami hesitates. With 82.♘d8! ♔b5 83.♘b7 ♔c6 84.♘d6 he could have out-manoeuvred his opponent, e.g. 84...♔c5 85.♔e6 ♔c6 86.♔e7 ♔c7 87.♘e4, and the knight will cover the a-pawn from b3.
82...♔b4 83.♘c6+
Here the players agreed a draw. White is still winning.

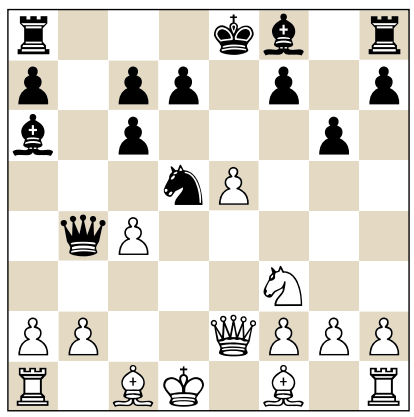
Kramnik found it hard to bounce back after his new defeat, failing to get more than a draw against Lawrence Trent in Round 5. But then he hit his customary form again, winning his last four games on the trot. I was especially impressed by his win in the final round.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

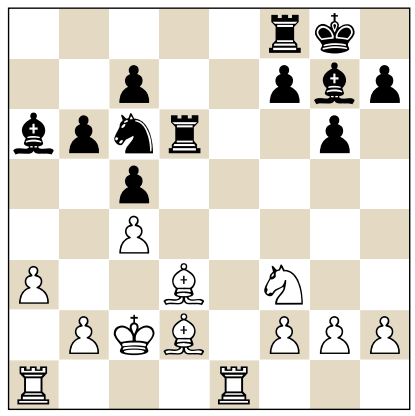
Hou Yifan claimed the £ 6,000 special women's prize. By bizarre coincidence the former Women's World Champion was paired against women in all of her first four games before she decided to take a bye in Round 5.

Gawain Jones
Vladimir Kramnik
Douglas 2017 (9)
Scotch Opening, Mieses Variation

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♕e7 7.♕e2 ♘d5 8.c4 ♗a6 9.♘d2 g6 10.♘f3 ♕b4+ 11.♔d1

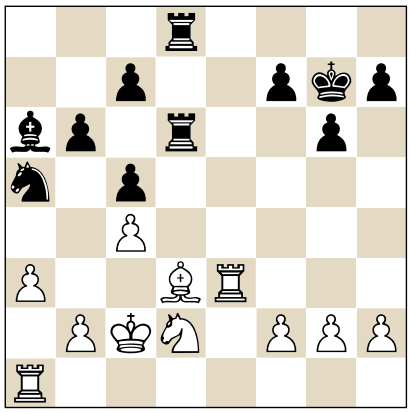


This sharp position has occurred regularly in practice. The most common moves here are 11...♖b8, 11...♘b6 and 11...♗g7.
11...♘e7
Probably the best response. Black wants to take his knight to c6 or f5.
12.♕c2
The alternative was 12.♔c2, but Jones wants to develop his king's bishop as quickly as possible.
12...c5 13.♗d3 ♗g7 14.♖e1 0-0 15.♕b3 ♘c6 16.♗d2 ♕b6
Kramnik wants to exchange the queens on his own terms to improve his set-up.
17.♕xb6 axb6 18.♔c2 ♖ad8 19.a3 d6 20.exd6 ♖xd6

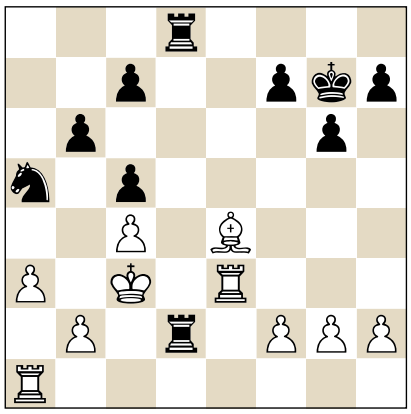


21.♗c3
White understandably wants to neutralize the fianchettoed bishop, but 21.♗f4 ♖d7 22.♖ad1 would also have been possible. The chances are roughly equal.
21...♘a5 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 23.♘d2

Too contrived. Better was 23.♔c3.
23...♖fd8 24.♖e3



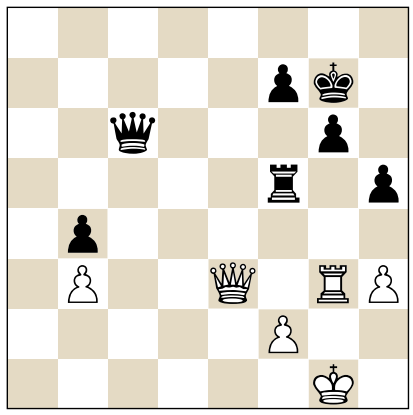
24...♗c8!
The bishop has no more business on a6 and is redeployed.
25.♔c3 ♗f5 26.♗xf5 ♖xd2 27.♗e4



27...♖8d4! Before taking on f2, he must prevent the white b-pawn from advancing.
28.b3 This loses hopelessly. White's only chance was 28.♗d3 ♖xf2 29.b4, although Black continues to have a large advantage after 29...♘c6.
28...♖xf2 29.♖f3 ♖e2 30.♗d5 c6 31.♗xf7 ♘b7 32.b4 ♘d6
White resigned.

As in Gibraltar, there were separate prizes for the women, the main prize being £6,000. The number of female participants was therefore relatively high, 21 in total. And as in Gibraltar, Hou Yifan was there, too. Many people will remember the bizarre way in which she lost her final game in Gibraltar to protest the fact that she had been paired with a woman seven times. In an improbable coincidence, her first four games in Douglas were also against four women. Now there is never a lack of conspiracy theorists on the Internet who thought this was done on purpose – but what could have been the arbiters' evil intentions? To punish Hou Yifan because she no longer wants to participate in women's tournaments? Too absurd for words. Not that Hou Yifan believed this herself, but she was still unhappy about it. When she got no pairing for Round 5, many people assumed she had withdrawn, but this turned out not to have been the case: she had requested a bye, which meant that she automatically got half a point. Douglas offered the players this possibility. In similar vein, Sokolov requested a bye in Round 6 because of a raging toothache.
It was good for Hou Yifan's peace of mind that she only had male opposition in the last four rounds. After eight rounds she had scored six points, making sure that the women's first prize would be hers.

I kept special tabs on 12-year-old Praggnanandhaa to see how he would fare. In Round 5, he made waves by beating Howell, and in the next round, he very nearly got the better of another strong GM.



Grandelius-Praggnanandhaa
Douglas 2017 (6)
position after 59.♔g1

Black has a healthy extra pawn, and the win is merely a matter of technique. If Black had now found 59...♖c5!, the game wouldn't have lasted much longer, and a grandmaster result would have been within reach. But he went:
59...♕d5, and after some more hesitation Grandelius managed to escape into a queen ending. Praggnanandhaa then went on to lose against Akobian, scuppering his chances of a GM result. ■

ALINA L'AMI

Their ambitions may be high, but just like anyone else, Indian prodigies Praggnanandhaa (12) and Nihal Sarin (13) know that a wild game of blitz is a perfect way to relax.

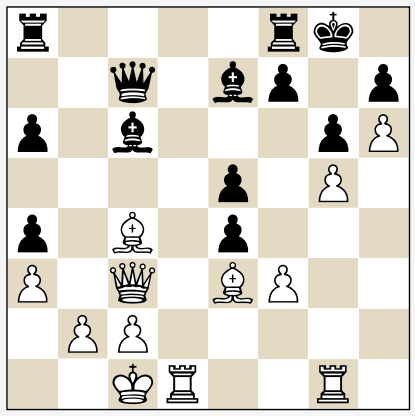
MAXIMize your Tactics

with Maxim Notkin

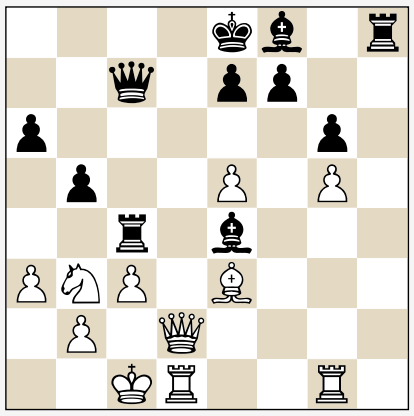
NEW IN CHESS * TRAINING *

Find the best move in the positions below

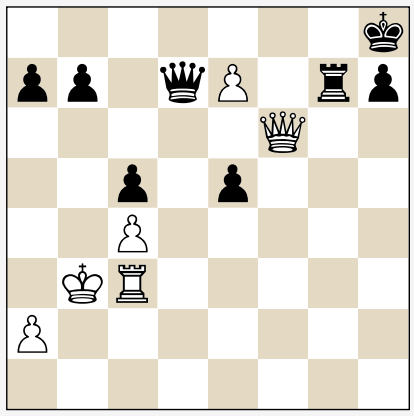
Solutions on page 93



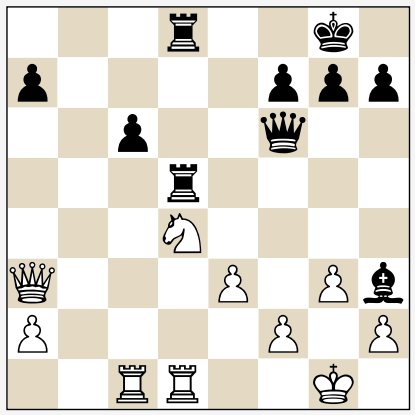
1. White to move



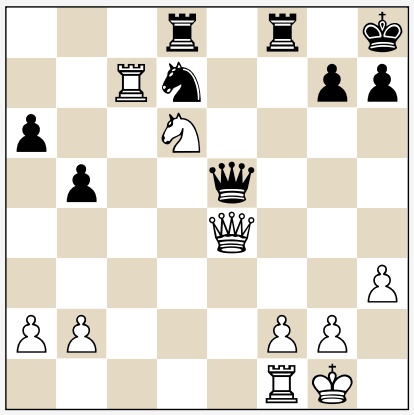
2. Black to move



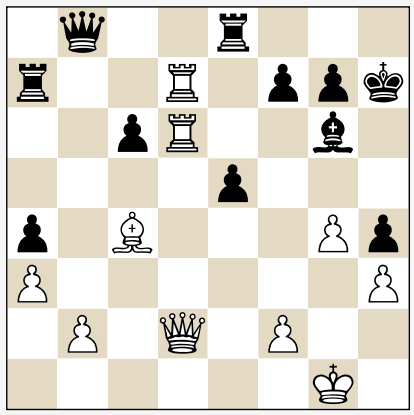
3. White to move



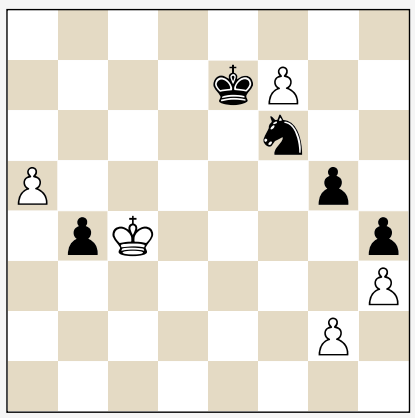
4. Black to move



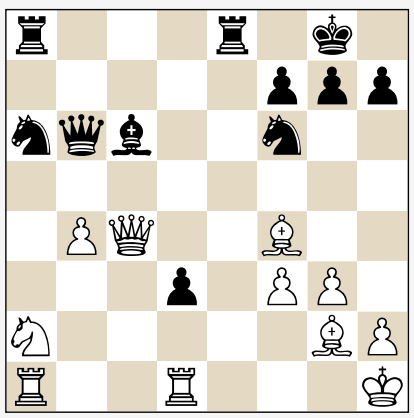
5. White to move



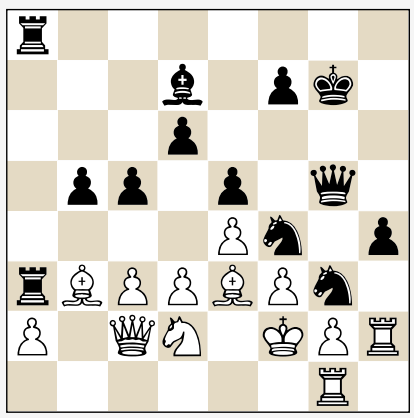
6. White to move



7. White to move



8. Black to move



9. Black to move

When Viktor met Bobby (for the last time)

by GENNA SOSONKO

After Viktor Kortchnoi had defected to the West, in 1976, one of the first people to congratulate him on this 'correct move' was Bobby Fischer. A year later, on a tour of the US, Kortchnoi met 'the Ghost of Pasadena' – and there their warm relations came to an end. A hitherto unpublished letter that Igor Kortchnoi found among the papers of his late father tells the story.

Forty years ago, in the summer of 1977, Viktor Kortchnoi won his semi-final Candidates' match against Lev Polugaevsky in Evian, France, 8½-4½. Next, one year after his defection to the West, Kortchnoi was to face former World Champion Boris Spassky in the Candidates' final match in Belgrade. The winner of that match would be entitled to challenge reigning World Champion Anatoly Karpov.

The match against Spassky was supposed to start in just two months, and at first Kortchnoi planned to get straight down to preparations after resting for a week or two. A wise decision, given the short time between the two matches, but then a surprise invitation from the United States scattered all the cards. He was offered a tour with lectures and simultaneous displays by Stuart Morden, the chess organizer and co-owner of The Game Room on Broadway, an offer that was so enticing that Kortchnoi couldn't resist the temptation. Moreover, several of the appearances were scheduled for California, where Bobby Fischer had been living (in Pasadena) since he beat Spassky in Reykjavik in 1972. And it was Fischer who had reacted practically the day after Kortchnoi's decision to stay in the West. Viktor hadn't forgotten the text of that telegram: 'Congratulations on your correct move, best wishes in your new life!'

What's more, Fischer had also sent him a letter from Pasadena, dated June 9, 1977 – on the eve of his match against Polugaevsky – enquiring about his well-being and again stressing his support for his defection, writing: 'Because of my uncompromising attitude toward mad-dog communism, I've had my problems, but such is life. I don't believe in compromising, accomadating [sic] or submiting [sic] to the forces of the devil.' Fischer had finished with a friendly 'Hope to see you in the States, Europe or elsewhere soon.'

And so, Kortchnoi didn't hesitate. It was decided; he had to go to America.

Winter hat

Here's what he himself recalled about that trip in his autobiography *Chess is my Life*: 'I began my performances in Chicago, gradually made my way to California, and then via New Orleans I returned to New York. And everywhere that I stopped I was followed by Robert Fischer, who inquired about me. He would phone, they would recognize his voice and ask who was phoning. He would reply that it was 'a party'. That happened in Chicago, and in Denver, and also later. But then, finally, I reached Los Angeles. The telephone calls ceased.

'From acquaintances I found out the number of Fischer's secretary Mrs Mokarow (in the English edition of Kortchnoi's memoirs Claudia Mokarow is erroneously named Mrs McKerrow – ed.) and phoned her. I told her that I wanted to meet Fischer. "That's impossible", she said. I decided to assume the full responsibility: "Come on, I've crossed the whole of America to meet him!" "Well, hang on." She phoned back quite soon: "Come to Pasadena tomorrow to such-and-such a street. That's where I work. Come at 12 o'clock, and he'll be there."

'By 12 o'clock, like the most punctual Swiss person, I was at the place. It was a warm August day. In a country where every minute is worth its weight in gold I waited 53 minutes for the American! Finally he appeared – wearing a winter hat and with a dozen books under his arm. Why the winter hat? For camouflage... That day, I think, that in the whole of California there wouldn't have been anyone else in winter attire. And the books? A present for me. It would appear that his anti-American, anti-social views had not yet conclusively taken shape. But he was already "probing" them: the books were largely about the all-Jewish conspiracy against the world powers. A few more years were to pass, and this Jew would slide into open, naked anti-Semitism...

'The first thing I sensed was that he was terribly alone – that there was no single man and no woman with whom he could be open. He was fairly frank with me. But he would have done better to find someone who was more familiar with the subtleties of the English language. We conversed for several hours. He suggested that we find somewhere to eat. He chose a restaurant and after the meal he paid for both of us. And then, now without the hat, he walked around the streets with me for a further couple of hours.

'We talked about many things. I was staggered by his amazing chess memory. Whatever game I mentioned, he would answer instantly, as if he himself had been thinking about that game. He severely criticized the American Chess Federation, the editor of the magazine U.S. Chess Review, and leader of the federation Edmondson, calling them all pro-Soviet. There was some truth in this, but it was rather superficial. Being a Soviet citizen, I was unable to understand that the Soviet Union was so incredibly strong! But the Soviet Chess Federation usurped its power in FIDE and behaved as though it owned it, breaking the laws and traditions of the organization. Everyone, throughout the world, not only the chess world, had to reckon with this bandit! And had I known how afraid everyone was of the Soviet dictates, I might have decided not to flee! I needed a lot of luck to uphold my position in the chess world, in the way that I did. Fischer admired my act, but he was unable to

'That day, I think, that in the whole of California there wouldn't have been anyone else in winter attire.'

Viktor Kortchnoi's respect for Bobby Fischer was immense, but his overall score against the American was equal. At the 1962 Curaçao Candidates tournament he even beat him twice with the black pieces.

connect logically all the links of what was happening in the chess world.

'Later Mrs Mokerow appeared and the two of them accompanied me by five o'clock to Los Angeles, where an hour later I was due to start a talk and a simultaneous display. I was full of the impressions of the day-time meeting, and, of course, said something about this to the chess enthusiasts. In the end, as I understood it, Fischer's presence in Pasadena was hardly a secret for most of the residents of Los Angeles. But Fischer reasoned otherwise. The following day he sent me an angry letter, where he inferred that I was working for Soviet intelligence. That was enough for me. I never corresponded any more with Fischer, and had nothing more to do with him. And if I was asked whether I wanted to play Fischer, I used to answer, and I still do, that apart from obligatory matches connected with the world championship, I prefer to meet at the board with people whom I respect...'

'I told you about the severe persecution I'm undergoing by the conspiritors.'

Keep your word

We'll leave Kortchnoi's account of that trip, written many years later, without commentary. Instead, we will look at the same events as they were perceived by the other side. After Kortchnoi's death, his son Igor found the letter that Bobby Fischer had sent to his father immediately after their meeting in Pasadena. Kortchnoi once mentioned this letter in an interview in this magazine (see New In Chess 1986/8), but as far as I know it has never been published before and I quote it verbatim.

September 25, 1977
Dear Victor,
How are you? I hope you had a nice trip back.
Just today I got a cassette tape copy of your speech at the Friday nite September 16th Exhibition (the day we met). I was very distressed. Hadn't I told you, and hadn't you agreed just a very few minutes earlier (before your speech) that you would keep our meeting and the substance of what we talked about completely confidential, except for the fact that we did indeed meet????? I don't understand this. Either your memory is very short or....
I told you about the severe persecution I'm undergoing by the conspiritors [sic]. I thought you understood this well. I appreciate your open personality, humor, friendliness, goodwill and so forth. But I can't keep the lines of communication open with someone who betrays my confidence. So the decision is yours. Incidentally some of the things you did say were quite garbled and distorted (not the tape – I mean you!) This may be due to the fact that our meeting was fairly brief or to your imperfect English or understanding of English. I know you still have your ties with the U.S.C.F. and F.I.D.E. I don't approve but that's up to you. I no longer have such ties and consider them vicious gangsters. Especially I don't want to give an "interview" with "Chess Life and Review." It would be a great and malicious "coup" for them to gain such an "interview" directly or indirectly from you. Again I explained all this to you. You don't have to share my views but you <u>must</u> keep your word. You have not done this I'm sorry to say. I don't know how much damage has already been done. I guess you gave other speeches and perhaps interviews before leaving for Europe. I'll have to wait and see as these drift into print.
<u>I'd appreciate it if you'd strictly adhere to our agreement from now on.</u>
All the best,
Bobby

P.S. My name is not needed on my P.O. Box address.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Are you not yet a subscriber to New In Chess? Give it a try! Take out a subscription today on the premier chess magazine in the world, and receive 8 issues a year. New In Chess Digital is available for iPhone, iPad, Android and Windows.

NEW IN CHESS		EUROPE	U.S.A. Canada Mexico	REST OF WORLD
1 year (8 issues)	print or digital	€79.99	$89.99	€79.99
1 years (8 issues)	print AND digital	€99.99	$113.99	€99.99
3 years (24 issues)	print or digital	€219.99	$239.99	€219.99
3 years (24 issues)	print AND digital	€279.99	$311.99	€279.99

SUBSCRIBE DIRECTLY AT WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM

New In Chess, P.O. Box 1093, 1810 KB Alkmaar, The Netherlands.
Phone: 0031-(0)72 512 7137, nic@newinchess.com

USA and Canada only:
New In Chess c/o Land of Chess, 707 Skokie Blvd, Suite 600, Northbrook, IL 60062, Phone: 847-480-2780, nic@newinchess.com

Correct and restrained

In Fischer's letter, which was left without a reply, the American writes that one of the reasons for their misunderstanding could have been Kortchnoi's insufficient level of English. Viktor probably didn't speak it then at a level at which he could converse with Bobby as an equal, although I can testify that even while he was in the Soviet Union, Kortchnoi was constantly improving his language, regularly reading books in English, and that he continued to do this after he stayed in the West. Although while living in Switzerland, Kortchnoi also learned German (which was required to obtain Swiss citizenship), he always said that English was his strongest foreign language.

But the point wasn't his knowledge of the language, of course: Fischer had asked Kortchnoi not to make the content of their conversation public, and he couldn't have failed to understand that. I think the American's letter was sufficiently correct and restrained. Bobby was 34 at the time, and although the ideas that would become an obsession had already taken root in his soul, he was still far from the paranoid man the world would see 15 years later at the second match against Spassky in Sveti Stefan.

■ ■ ■

Despite his sharp words about Fischer the person, even in the Soviet period of his life, Kortchnoi, giving the American chess genius his dues, always referred to him extremely respectfully. Six years before the events described above, Viktor and I were running one of our training camps on the outskirts of Leningrad. From time to time, the maestro broke off from our analysis and suggested looking at a Fischer game. I remember Kortchnoi exclaiming after looking at one of them: 'Look how he plays! How he plays! Who among us plays the King's Indian like that? Who? Stein? Well, OK, Stein, and who else? Exactly!'

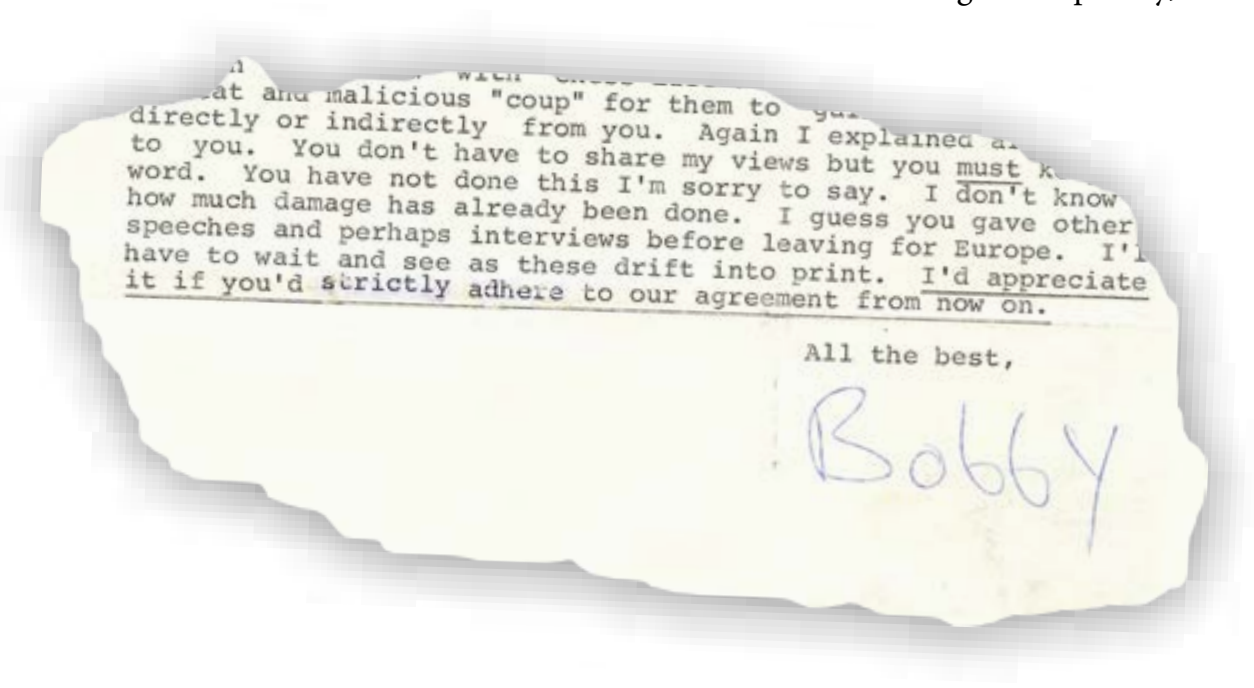
Another time Viktor recalled the Interzonal tournament in Stockholm in 1962: 'During that tournament I had very friendly, one could say even warm relations with him. Once, discussing opening problems, I said that Smyslov had invented a new system in the Spanish, starting with the move 9...h6. What, Fischer was surprised, just 9...h6? Deliberately weakening the kingside? And he shook his head in disbelief. I had already used that system against Gligoric, and was thinking about playing it against him too, but Fischer went 9.d4. I had a wonderful position, but I blundered in time trouble and lost. The next day I said that if I had moved differently it would have been very hard for him to make a draw. That I was even prepared to make a bet with him of 100 dollars. In reply he only smiled: "Really...?" – and that was it.'

Kortchnoi also recalled his refusal to travel as a second to Petrosian to his match against Fischer in Buenos Aires in 1971: 'I did that above all because I was ashamed to look Fischer in the eye – I'd just taken part in the Candidates' tournament, fighting for the World Championship, and now I would be coming to help someone else. So it would have turned out that he was right when he said that all Soviets were the same.'

Genius

After Fischer had passed away, Kortchnoi, characterizing the American, said: 'He always spoke against the majority. Always. He played his last match with Spassky in 1992 in Yugoslavia. Yet he had a choice; he could have played in Spain or Germany, but he preferred Yugoslavia. Why? We know what kind of relationship the United States had with Yugoslavia back then. Thus he was standing up against the whole world. Coincidence? No, there was something in it. This was a person who in his time had stood up alone against the entire Soviet chess school. Alone! In Reykjavik, where he won his match against Spassky, Lombardy was there only to write protests and statements on his behalf – Fischer didn't even let him near the chess. And he didn't play for so long after that, 20 years! Yes, I have to admit that Fischer was a genius, if after a 20-year break he sat down at the chess board in 1992 and played like that. True, Spassky wasn't strongly motivated in that match, it's a fact, but still – to play LIKE THAT.'

Kortchnoi called Fischer a genius, but in relation to themselves they both avoided such strong definitions. 'Genius is only a word. What does it mean?' Fischer said. 'If I win, I'm a genius. If not, I'm not.' Two years before Kortchnoi's death a journalist asked him, 'Do you consider yourself


directly or indirectly from you. Again I explained
to you. You don't have to share my views but you must
word. You have not done this I'm sorry to say. I don't know
how much damage has already been done. I guess you gave other
speeches and perhaps interviews before leaving for Europe. I'
have to wait and see as these drift into print. I'd appreciate
it if you'd strictly adhere to our agreement from now on.
All the best,
Bobby

a chess genius?' 'No.' 'Are you saying that firmly?' 'Well, if I've rejected the word "great", then I reject the word "genius" all the more.'

Explaining the nature of his successes, Fischer once said, 'Chess requires absolute concentration and love of the game.' And another time: 'I give 98 percent of my mental energy to chess. Other people give only 2 percent of it.'

Kortchnoi replied in a similar way to a question about the main thing that had helped him become who he was: 'Evidently my colossal love of chess, and on that basis the same amount of hard work that flowed from my desire to develop my talent.' As for the mental energy that Fischer spoke of, I don't know what percentage of it Kortchnoi gave to chess, but the fact that chess was among his life's priorities, and success in it was also far more important than anything else, is not in doubt.

Despite their completely different backgrounds, they had quite a lot in common. With their difficult personalities, anxious and suspicious, they didn't trust anyone, sensing hidden agendas and conspiracies in everything. And if their suspicions coincided with reality even to a small degree, it reinforced their explanations of people's motives and actions and their own world view even more.

Sooner or later, even those people who had very good relations with them felt the pricks of their barbed egos, certainly their loved ones, for whom it was hardest of all. Even when their physical exterior had crumbled, they remained exactly the same person, and even the threat of death itself couldn't change them.

Stubbornly pursing his lips

Helgi Olafsson writes in his memoir *Bobby Fischer Comes Home* that in his Reykjavik hospital there was a book on the topic of 'what doctors can do with you' on the table next to Fischer's bed, and you can imagine how the doctor examining him felt. Bobby not only rejected all surgical interventions, but also refused pain relievers: who could know what those tablets really were. They explained to him how serious his situation was, but even when experiencing severe pain he categorically refused an operation that would probably have prolonged his life.

In conversations with me in the final, disabled period of his life, Kortchnoi complained on more than one occasion about doctors who couldn't or didn't want to help him.

When he began having mental problems that forced him to attend a psychiatric clinic, the doctor advised him to stay there for a week for a full examination.

I called Switzerland and his wife picked up the phone. 'You know Viktor,' Petra said. 'He has such a strong will, he might leave, he might run away...'

Me: 'But he's in a wheelchair.'

'Even in a wheelchair he might run away!'

Even at the very end, in hospital, when he was asked to drink some kind of solution for analysis, to make a sharp image, he wouldn't give in, stubbornly pursing his lips and repeating only one word – home!

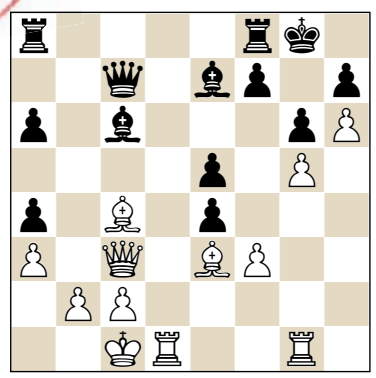
'With their difficult personalities, anxious and suspicious, they didn't trust anyone, sensing hidden agendas and conspiracies in everything.'

They first saw each other in 1960 at the tournament in Buenos Aires. Viktor wasn't yet 30, and Bobby was only 17. After that they only met at the chessboard or on the sidelines of tournaments, talking about chess or chess-related topics. That continued until Kortchnoi defected to the West.

The first personal meeting in Pasadena between these two expressive, prickly and self-obsessed personalities turned out to be their last. Relations between the two top chess players were broken off, and they never saw each other again. ■

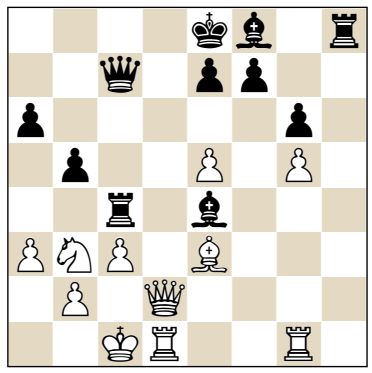
AVE-KONTAKT
CZECHTOUR
2017
17th International Chess Festivals Series
More detailed information: AVE-KONTAKT s.r.o., Strossova 239, 530 03 Pardubice, Czech Republic, Tel.: + 420 – 466 535 200, mobile phone: + 420 - 608 203 007, e-mail: j.mazuch@avekont.cz
11.–18. 11. 2017 | BRNO – FIDE open
19.–25. 11. 2017 | PILSEN – FIDE open
12.–19. 1. 2018 | PRAGUE – IM norm open + FIDE open
20.–27. 1. 2018 | MARIENBAD – GM + IM round robin, FIDE open, senior open
24. 2. – 3. 3. 2018 | LIBEREC – FIDE open
www.czechtour.net

MAXIMize your Tactics Solutions



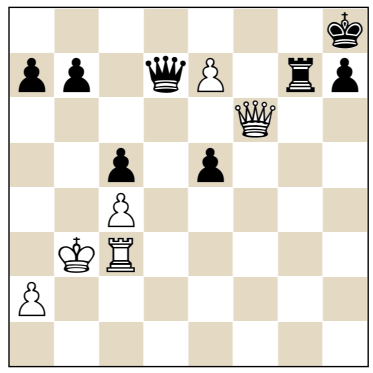
1. Quesada-Li Ruifeng
Philadelphia 2017

The white queen would like to meet her counterpart face to face: **22.♖d7! ♗xd7** 22...♕xd7 23.♕xe5 with mate on g7. **23.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 24.♕xc7** And White went on to win.



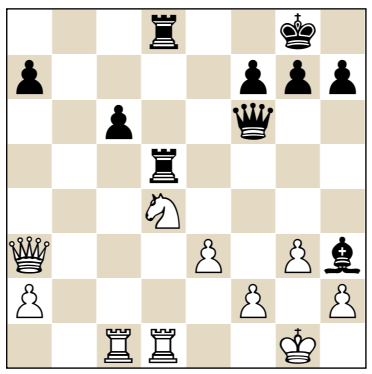
2. Ivic-Dobrov
Veliko Gradiste 2017

Here it is Black who forcefully combines the threats to the enemy king and queen: **22...♖h2!** White resigned in view of 23.♕xh2 ♖xc3+! 24.bxc3 ♕xc3+ or 24.♔d2 ♖c2+.



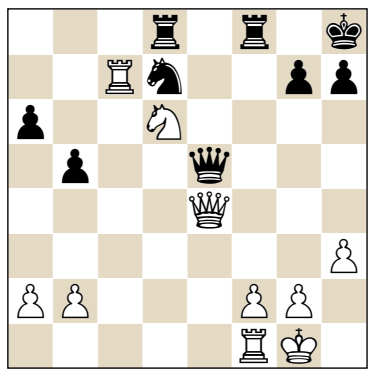
3. Stupak-Puranik
Zalakaros 2017

The white passed pawn is doomed but becomes a queen for an instant, and with a purpose: **41.e8♕+! ♕xe8 42.♖d3!** with ♖d8 on the next move. Black resigned shortly after.



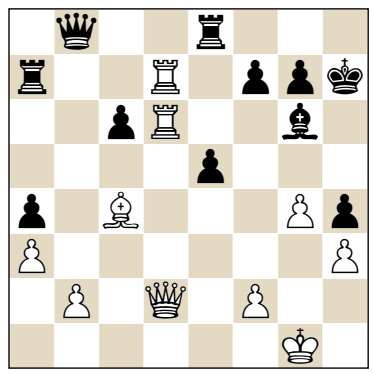
4. Garcia Palermo-Todorovic
Novi Sad 2017

22...c5! 23.♖xc5 ♕f3! and White resigned on account of the back-rank disaster. The immediate 22...♕f3?? 23.♘xf3 ♖xd1+ 24.♘e1 would have been too hasty.



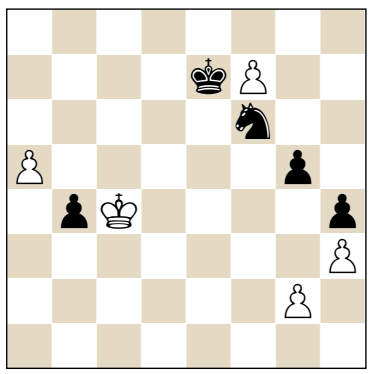
5. Belouadah-Phiri
Oran 2017

31.♖xd7! A neat liquidation. **31...♕xe4 32.♖xd8 ♕e7 33.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 34.♖e1!** With ♖e8 coming next. Black resigned. 34.♖c1 was also an option.



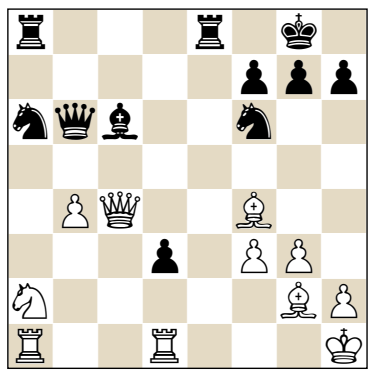
6. D. Vera-Prasca
Medellin 2017

33.♖xg6! ♖xd7 33...fxg6 34.♕g5! and ♕xh4+ leads to checkmate. In the event of 33...♔xg6 34.♗xf7+ Black is totally lost as well. **34.♕g5! ♖d6 35.♗xf7** Black resigned.



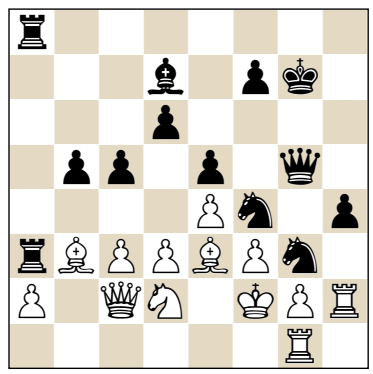
7. Sheng-Talla
Krakow 2017

This one is all about move order! **39.a6** If 39.f8♕+ ♔xf8 40.a6 ♘e8! stops the pawn. **39...♘d7 40.f8♕+** 40.a7 ♘b6+ 41.♔xb4 ♔xf7 42.♔b5 ♘a8 43.♔c6 ♔e6 is a draw, while 40.♔b5?? b3 41.f8♕+ ♘xf8 even loses. **40...♔xf8 41.♔b5!** Black resigned.



8. Lan Zilun-Wang Hao
Beijing 2017

22...♘g4! 23.fxg4 23.h3 ♘f2+ loses the exchange. **23...♗xg2+ 24.♔xg2 ♖e2+ 25.♔h3 g5!** Firmly blocking the king's escape route. **26.♗xg5 ♕f2 27.♖h1 ♕g2+** White resigned in view of 28.♔h4 ♕xh2+! and mate.



9. Kozionov-Predke
Samara 2017

31...c4! 32.dxc4 ♖xa2! Or 32...bxc4. **33.♗xa2 ♖xa2 34.♗xf4** 34.♕xa2 ♘d3 is a charming mate. **34...exf4 35.♕d3** Now 35.♕xa2 is bad due to 35...♕c5+!. **35...♕c5+ 36.♕d4+ ♕xd4+ 37.cxd4 ♖xd2+** And Black soon won.

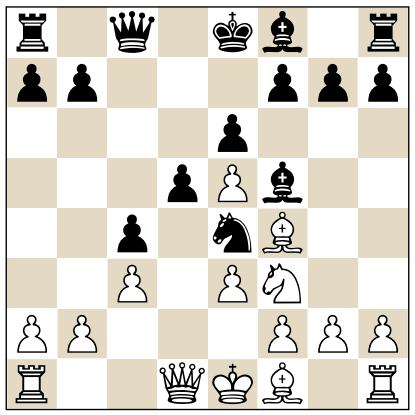
Chess Pattern Recognition

ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

The mighty octopus

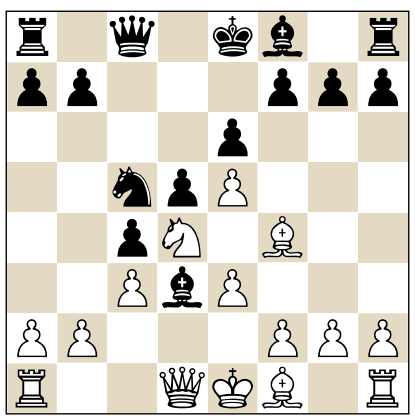
No better example to illustrate the relative value of a piece than a paralysing knight in the heart of the opponent's position!

Let's start with some basic stuff. A typical bishop exchange prepares for an unassailable knight, firmly supported by a pawn. Yet here a strong grandmaster seems to be taken by surprise.



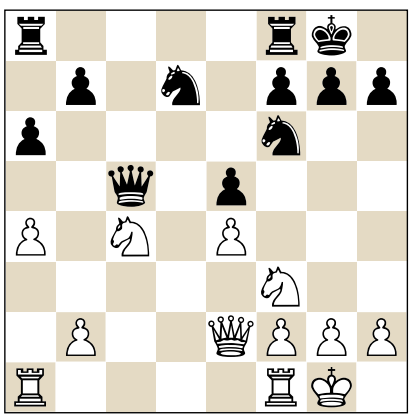
Georgiev-Andersen
Gjakova 2016
position after 12.♘f3

Already Black had obtained a comfortable position from the opening, but now White will soon regret having refrained from swapping the knight on e4.
12...♘c5! 13.♘d4 ♗d3!



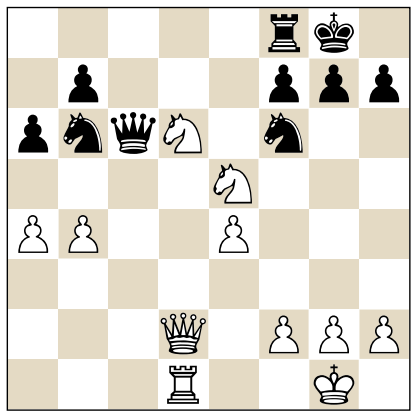
After the exchange of the light-squared bishops the octopus will arise on d3. Compare, for example, 1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e6 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.a3 ♗c5 7.♘b3 ♗b6 8.♗f4 d5 9.c5!? ♗c7 10.♗xc7 ♕xc7 11.♘b5 ♕b8 12.♘d6. Not as powerful perhaps, but the same mechanism. **14.♗e2 ♗xe2 15.♕xe2 ♘d3+ 16.♔f1** Besides the superb knight on d3, which looks in all directions, the position of White's king considerably adds to White's misery. Georgiev did not manage to disentangle his pieces properly and the young Danish grandmaster eventually won (0-1, 41).

Mind you, in a more simplified position, and just supported by a piece, an octopus can also be a fearsome intruder.



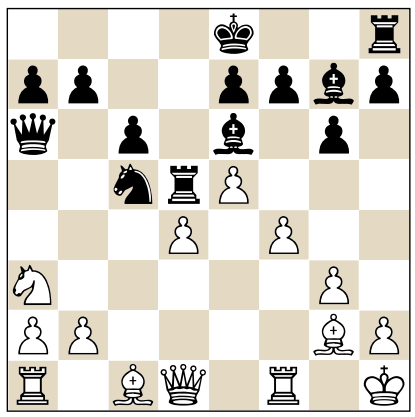
Giri-Svidler
Shenzhen 2017
position after 15...0-0

16.♖fd1! ♖ac8 Svidler quickly develops one of his rooks to the open c-file, before the octopus arises on d6. **17.♘d6 ♖c6 18.♕d2 ♕b6** Black is still struggling. For example, 18...♘b6 fails to 19.b4, catching the queen. **19.b4 ♕c7 20.♖ac1 ♘b6** 20...♖d8 21.♖xc6 bxc6 (21...♕xc6 22.♕a2) 22.♘f5 is no picnic either. **21.♖xc6 ♕xc6 22.♘xe5**



And Giri had a winning advantage, although Svidler miraculously escaped with a draw (½-½, 39; see New In Chess 2017/3 for this).

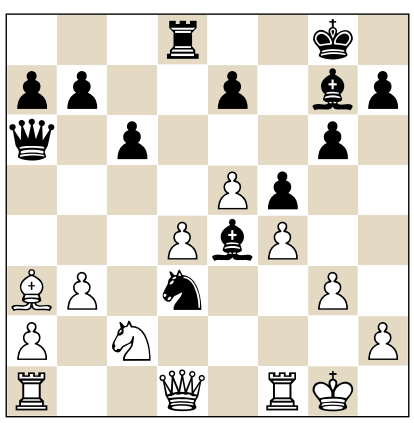
Next, a much more complicated example, in which the octopus has less firm support.



Giri-Granda Zuniga
Germany 2017
position after 17.f4

17...♘d3! 'A knight on f5 can be worth a pawn, a knight on d3 an exchange', Kasparov has said. So why withdraw the rook from d5, Granda will have thought. Besides, after

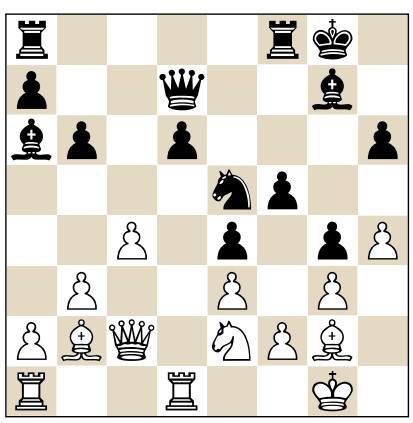
17...♖d8 18.♗e3 ♘d3 19.♕d2 it will be difficult to find solid support for the octopus. **18.♗xd5 ♗xd5+** The bishop on d5 is also a beauty, of course. **19.♔g1 0-0 20.♘c2 ♖d8 21.b3** Preparing to exchange the knight with ♘e1. The immediate 21.♘e1 runs into 21...♗c4 22.♘xd3 ♖xd4, when Black's pawn and activity compensate for the exchange. **21...f5 22.♗a3?!** Somewhat optimistic; now the octopus will maintain itself for a considerable time, dominating the white rooks. The more prudent approach was 22.♘e1 ♗e4 23.♗e3. **22...♗e4**



23.♕d2 It appears that 23.♗xe7 fails to 23...♖xd4!! 24.♘xd4 ♕b6, so the a3-bishop turns out to be out of place. Though the remainder of the game is not that clear-cut, Giri eventually succumbed to the increasing pressure. **23...c5 24.dxc5 g5 25.fxg5 ♗xe5** 25...♖d5 was a good alternative, when 26.♕e2 can be met by the ever-charming mate pattern 26...♘f4 27.♕xa6 ♘h3 mate. **26.♖ad1 ♕g6 27.♕e3 h6 28.♗c1** Retracing its steps. After 28.gxh6 f4 Black crashes through. **28...♔h7 29.h4 hxg5 30.♕xg5 ♖g8 31.♖xd3** White finally disposes of the octopus by returning the exchange; but it is too late to save the game. The same goes for the queen swap. After 31.♕xg6+ ♖xg6 32.♗g5 ♗xg3 White can no longer parry the threat ♗xh4. **31...♗xd3 32.♖e1** 32.♕xe7+ ♕g7 33.♕xg7+ ♖xg7, and too much is hanging in White's position. **32...♗f6 33.♕xg6+ ♖xg6 34.♘b4 ♗e4 35.♖e2 a5 36.h5 ♖xg3+ 37.♔h2 ♗e5** 0-1.

'A knight on f5 can be worth a pawn, a knight on d3 an exchange', Kasparov has said.

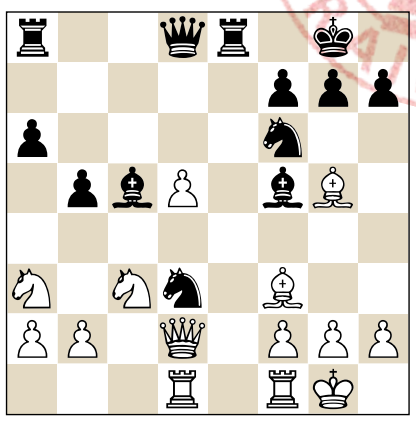
A powerful stronghold like the octopus, certainly when protected by a pawn, may give a player a false sense of safety, but Kasparov's assessment of its relative value should tip off the defender, too...



Eljanov-Rapport
Wijk aan Zee 2017
position after 22.♘e2

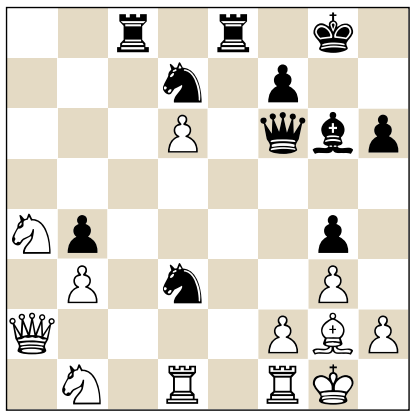
22...♘d3?! Understandably jumping in before White will play ♘f4. **23.♗xg7 ♕xg7 24.♘d4 ♖ae8 25.♖xd3!** Certainly this beast is worth the exchange! **25...exd3 26.♕xd3** Black is left with a lousy pawn structure and passive rooks. With a pawn to the good, as well as beautiful squares for his pieces, White clearly has the better of it and he smoothly went on to win. **26...♗b7 27.♗xb7 ♕xb7 28.♘e2 ♖f6 29.♘f4 ♕e4 30.♕d2 ♖c8 31.a4 ♖c5 32.♖d1 ♕f3 33.♘d5 ♖f7 34.♕c2 a6 35.♘xb6 ♕e4 36.♕c3 ♕e5 37.♖d4 a5 38.♕d3 ♖c6 39.♘d5 ♔g7 40.♘c3 ♖f6 41.♖d5** 1-0.

Successful as this elimination might be, in New In Chess 2016/4 (p.78) Kasparov talked about his 'favourite octopus knight on d6', referring to a blitz game against So in St. Louis. But no doubt the most famous octopus of all was also on his mind:



Karpov-Kasparov
Moscow 1985 (match-16)
position after 16...♘d3

17.♘ab1 As so often, the white rooks cannot use the open files due to the tentacles of the octopus. After 17.d6, to gain some activity for the White pieces, Kasparov intended to proceed in style and give the exchange with 17...♕xd6 18.♗xa8 ♖xa8, when Black's active pieces certainly make up for the exchange. As you will recall, a much crueller fate awaited Karpov: **17...h6 18.♗h4 b4 19.♘a4 ♗d6 20.♗g3 ♖c8 21.b3 g5 22.♗xd6 ♕xd6 23.g3 ♘d7 24.♗g2 ♕f6 25.a3 a5 26.axb4 axb4 27.♕a2 ♗g6 28.d6 g4**



Complete domination, thanks to the octopus! Thus, according to the aesthetic precepts of Boleslavsky, as Aronian taught us in the previous issue of New In Chess (page 53), a position of exceptional beauty was created.
29.♕d2 ♔g7 30.f3 ♕xd6 31.fxg4 ♕d4+ 32.♔h1 ♘f6 33.♖f4 ♘e4 34.♕xd3 ♘f2+ 35.♖xf2 ♗xd3 36.♖fd2 ♕e3 37.♖xd3 ♖c1 38.♘b2 ♕f2 39.♘d2 ♖xd1+ 40.♘xd1 ♖e1+ 0-1. ■

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

In 1951, the British government, yielding to pressure from apartheid South Africa, exiled Seretse Khama, kgosi (king) of the Bamangwato, from his home in the impoverished protectorate of Bechuanaland. It was a craven act of political expediency, punishing a man whose only 'crime' had been to marry a white Englishwoman, Ruth Williams, whilst studying to become a barrister at the Inner Temple in London. It was not until five years later, after Seretse renounced the throne, that he was permitted to return. With fitting retribution, the wronged former monarch led his country to independence, becoming Botswana's first President in 1966.

Landing in the capital Gaborone after the short flight from Johannesburg, I was met by Kenneth Boikhutswane from Talking Squares Chess Trust, who had invited me as part of his ambitious medium-term plan to create Botswana's first grandmaster. By chance, the Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, Tshekedi Khama – a tall and somewhat light-skinned gentleman, whose distinguished bearing betrayed his regal lineage – was sitting in the café, with his son. We were quickly introduced. Tshekedi and his brother, Lieutenant General Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama – the current President of Botswana – are both offspring of that scandalous royal miscegenation.

With no player in the country rated over 2200, Kenneth's vaulting vision might ostensibly appear fanciful. There are, however, some very positive roots. For a start, Botswana is far from being poor. Thanks in no small part to the discovery of diamonds, in 1967, the country has hauled itself up from crippling destitution to become one of the richest (and most stable) in Africa, ahead even of its larger, southern neighbour. Thus the necessary learning tools, like laptops, are available to the vast majority. More importantly though, chess is in some ways surprisingly popular: after football and athletics our humble game holds as prominent a position as any other sport, as was attested to by the opening well-attended press conference and numerous television, radio and newspaper interviews. Furthermore, tournaments exist in abundance: it is possible to play competitively on just about any weekend – a boon for a nation of just two and a quarter million people.

Why then is Botswana not already stronger at chess? A clue may, perhaps, be gleaned from the (free) lecture I gave on one of the days, when an Indian boy was the solitary attendee. While it is certainly true that the event was poorly advertised, it was still a shockingly low turn-out. Even Hikaru Nakamura and Garry Kasparov have listened to talks of mine and, believe me, they have an awful lot less to learn. I suspect rather that most Botswanans don't have a real concept of the amount of dedication that is required to become a GM. Instilling that work-ethic will be a key priority of any prospective national coach – a key goal of the fund-raising drive.

As expected, there was much greater enthusiasm for the simuls. The first – mostly against school kids – was not inordinately taxing, but the second, featuring several international players, was far more difficult. I conceded a handful of draws and one defeat – to Ndawana Mosenya. Incidentally the latter event was attended by the head of Botswana's National Olympic Committee and by the British High Commissioner, Katy Ransome, and her Deputy, Emily Summers. Remarkably the two English ladies stayed for four hours, 'mesmerised', as the High Commissioner said, by the unusual spectacle.

After all the exhausting work, it was a welcome change to visit the Mokolodi Nature Reserve on the final day in the pleasant company of attorney Mboki Chilisa – one of the sponsors – plus Kenneth and his wife. There aren't too many cities where you can find leopards, hippos and giraffes in their natural environment just a 15 minutes' drive from the Central Business District! No wonder Vishy Anand adored the country when he visited a few years ago.

The following morning, having said goodbyes, I flew to Johannesburg and thence to Maseru, capital of the spectacular mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. This part of my trip had been arranged by the Kasparov Chess Foundation Africa – the largest and wealthiest chess promoter on the continent – in conjunction with the local federations. When I had mentioned to the Director, Graham Jurgensen, that I was going to be in his neck of the woods, he jumped at the opportunity of employing my services. My choice of destinations, Lesotho and Swaziland, neither of which I had been to before, dovetailed with his objectives, as they had both missed out

on what I dubbed the 'Black Brothers' tours of GMs Maurice Ashley, Pontus Carlsson and Kenny Solomon a few months earlier.

I was met at the tiny airport by a delegation which included both the current federation President, Thloriso Morienyane, and his predecessor, Ts'eliso Motloheloa, whom I knew from a lively religious debate over dinner at Montecasino, Johannesburg, in 2015. I was then driven, by government car, through some squalid neighbourhoods along deeply pot-holed roads, before joining the lengthy highway to Teyeteyaneng. As the chess-loving manager of the Blue Mountain Inn had previously provided the venue for international tournaments, it was understandable why the federation utilized this resource. The hotel was quiet, apart from the bleating of sheep, and comfortable enough. Nevertheless, with hindsight, it was a questionable decision for such a brief visit to select accommodation so remote from the hubbub of city life.

The first day, coaching some coaches, was straightforward. The federation has been a FIDE member only since 2012, and the top-rated player is under 1800. Rudimentary endgame knowledge, such as the Lucena position and 'the opposition', was entirely new to many players. There is a limit to what one can achieve in a short time other than provide some inspiration and a few pointers for self-improvement. Still, it was a satisfactory session, made better when I was joined afterwards by Graham who had flown in with some excellent bottles of red wine.

The next morning was a tad stressful. Despite arriving at the crack of dawn, our driver was required to make literally dozens of jaw-dropping traffic violations to get us to our appointment with the Education Minister (almost) on time. Thankfully this went well and the subsequent meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister even better. As he recalled, during his student days in Moscow, Brezhnev honouring Anatoly Karpov, I casually mentioned that I had once defeated the former World Champion in a match. The Deputy PM's eyes immediately lit up in admiration and he turned to shake me firmly by the hand. The General Secretary of the federation, Mahlauli Manyeli, then seized the opportunity to publicly propose me for the position of national coach. It was a most flattering offer, but I later teased her for not having warned me beforehand.

Words come cheap, and effusive expressions of goodwill from politicians do not necessarily translate into tangible financial support. One real reason for optimism though is that Lesotho's Minister of Communications, Joang Milano (who regrettably was abroad at the time), is more than a fan – he actually played at the 2016 Baku Olympiad.

After lunch I delivered a lecture on Captain Evans' dodgy gambit, followed by a simul. Some of the kids showed potential, but nevertheless I would have completed a clean sweep had I not recklessly sacrificed a rook against a more experienced player.

It was time to move on. Graham and I flew back to Johannesburg, where we exchanged his Jaguar for his father's SUV in readiness for the long and occasionally rough road to Swaziland. Highlights of the journey included a large dust devil (a sort of tornado) and a motorway service station with rhinos, water buffaloes and zebras. Europe this was not. Crossing the border was arduous, and we arrived in Manzini (the second city) after dark.

Highlights of the journey included a large dust devil (a sort of tornado) and a motorway service station with rhinos, water buffaloes and zebras.

According to the U.N., Swaziland has the lowest life-expectancy in the world, primarily due to the devastating effect of AIDS. It is not far from the bottom of the FIDE rankings either, lying behind its rival Lesotho. To be honest, arrangements were a touch haphazard: the hotel booking was not secured and on the first day nothing went even approximately according to schedule. On the positive side, people were friendly and at least we obtained some TV coverage. However, as I was departing for Maputo the following afternoon, I had to read them the Riot Act regarding the punctuality of my morning clock simul. The stern warning got through: we didn't start on time, of course, but it wasn't that late either. With a little help from my opponents, I broke through an impenetrable fortress in one game, and then survived a dead-lost position against their leading player, Fungai Matahwa, to eventually record a 100% score. Fungai was then gracious enough to drive me to the sleepy border crossing in the company of the President, Melo Mdluli. I crossed on foot to be met on the other side. The trip to Mozambique was another interesting story, but one, alas, which shall have to wait. ■

Judit Polgar

b3 or not b3?

Indeed, that can be the question for Richard Rapport on move 1. Looking at some of his best efforts as a team player, **JUDIT POLGAR** investigates the special talent of the imaginative young Hungarian star.

Richard Rapport is one of the very few strong Hungarian players of today that I have never met over the board during my career. I got to know him better when, at the age of just 18, he was selected as a member of the Hungarian team that I captained at the Tromsø 2014 Olympiad. I soon found out that 'Ricsi' had a very special character and an unusual repertoire for his level, preferring to put the focus on the middlegame.

At the start of the Olympiad, Rapport scored rather modestly, but his finish was outstanding: 3½ out of 4 against very strong opposition! This proved a decisive contribution to the bronze medals gained by our team and yielded him the individual gold medal on second board.

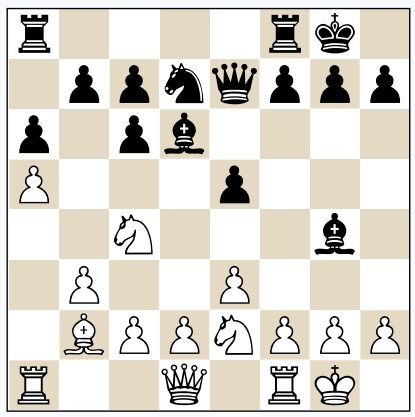
Ricsi's winning streak started with the following game, so typical for his style.

Richard Rapport
Alexander Onischuk
Tromsø Olympiad 2014

1.b3 The Larsen Opening is a rare bird at high level, but Rapport had already played it twice in Wijk aan Zee earlier that year.

1...e5 2.♗b2 ♘c6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗d6 5.♘a3 Original, but actually this is the main line. White wants to increase the pressure on e5.

5...a6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.♘c4 ♕e7 8.a4 0-0 9.a5 ♗g4 10.♘e2 ♘d7 11.0-0



In spite of the first moves, if White could play e3-e4, the game would more or less transpose to a favourable version of the structure typical for the Ruy Lopez Delayed Exchange Variation (4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♗xc6 dxc6). This explains Black's next move, which, however, clears the path for White's bishop and allows him to get a mobile central majority.

11...e4 12.♘xd6 cxd6 13.f3! exf3 14.gxf3 ♗h3 15.♖f2 ♘e5 16.f4 ♘g6 17.f5 ♕g5+ 18.♘g3 ♘e5 19.♖a4! I love it when all of a sudden rooks come into play from the side. Two moves later, after Black's blunder, the rook's presence on the fourth rank will be decisive.

19...♗g4 20.♕f1 With seemingly simple means White has obtained an advantage on practically the entire board. Left without a constructive plan and facing the threat of an attack starting with f5-f6, Onischuk immediately blunders. **20...f6? 21.♗xe5** 1-0. Black loses his bishop to 22.♕c4+.

Even though before the 2015 European Team Championship in Reykjavik, Rapport had shown that he was in great form and had improved his rating considerably, I preferred him to play below Peter Leko for the sake of stability. This proved an inspired decision, since Rapport's 3 out of 3 start on Board 2 is every captain's dream.

The third game took place under dramatic circumstances. We played France right after hearing the news about the terrorist attack in Paris, a tragedy that obviously affected our opponents. Rapport was facing Laurent Fressinet, whom he knew very well, because he had been his second. The game ended in a convincing win for our player.

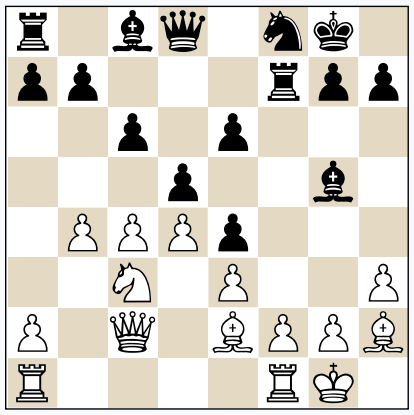
Rapport also scored two important wins in the decisive rounds. On these occasions he refrained from 1.b3, but developed his queen's bishop on the second move anyway! The Round 7 game against Spain was a good technical effort, even though the start was a bit unusual.

Richard Rapport
David Anton Guijarro
Reykjavik European Teams 2015

1.d4 f5 2.♗f4!? ♘f6 3.e3 e6 4.♗e2 ♗e7 5.h3 0-0 6.♘f3 ♘e4 7.♘fd2 d5 The game has transposed to a Stonewall structure, making it clear that the bishop stands well on the h2-b8 diagonal.

8.♘xe4 fxe4 9.c4 ♗g5 10.♗h2! Avoiding Black's kingside counterplay and keeping the e5-square under control.

10...♘d7 11.♘c3 c6 12.0-0 ♖f7 13.♕c2 ♘f8 14.b4



While White's play develops naturally, Black still has problems coming up with a constructive plan.

14...♘g6 15.♗h5 ♖f6 16.b5 ♘h4 17.♗e5 ♖h6 18.♗g4

Despite Black's efforts to build up an attack, the white bishops defend the kingside quite effectively, while at the same time keeping other important board sectors under observation.

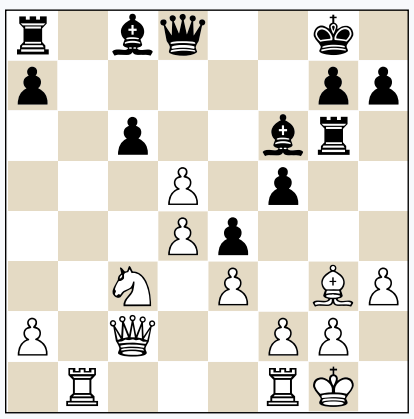
18...♖g6 19.♖ab1 ♗f6 20.♗g3!

Once again Rapport avoids the exchange. He has been moving around with the bishops a lot, but Black failed to use the time to create concrete threats. In addition, his queenside is still undeveloped.

20...♘f5

This plays into White's hands, but Black's queenside was in trouble anyway.

21.♗xf5 exf5 22.bxc6 bxc6 23.cxd5



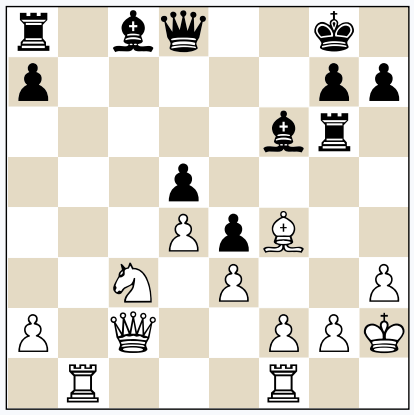
23...f4!? This thematic pawn sacrifice, clearing the diagonal for the undeveloped bishop, comes too late to change the course of the game. After 23...cxd5 24.♖b5 ♗e6 25.♖fb1 ♖c8 26.♖b8, Black has insurmountable back-rank problems.

24.♗xf4

This simple move is good enough to keep the advantage, but the spectacular 24.dxc6!! would have won more quickly: 24...fxg3 25.♕xe4 gxf2+ 26.♖xf2. The threat c6-c7 is decisive, since blocking the pawn allows mate in one: 26...♕c7? 27.♕e8 mate.

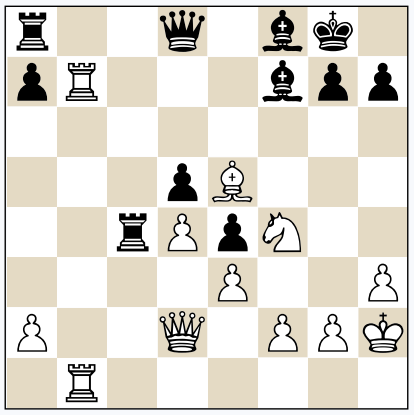
24...cxd5 24...♗xh3 25.♗g3 ♗d7 26.d6, followed by ♖b7 or ♕xe4, wins.

25.♔h2



White has won a pawn and kept all his trumps, while Black still does not have a clear counterattacking plan. In the next phase, Rapport combines threats on both wings and wins quickly.

25...♗g5 26.♗e5 ♖c6 Black fails to create counterplay with 26...♗a6 27.♘b5 ♕d7 28.a4. **27.♖fc1 ♗e6 28.♖b7 ♗e7 29.♕d2 ♗f8 30.♘e2 ♖c4 31.♘f4 ♗f7 32.♖cb1**



The threat of 33.♖b8 is decisive, but Black's next move only puts more oil on the fire.

32...g5? 33.♕e2 Just one of several winning moves. **33...♕e8** 33...gxf4? leads to a quick mate after 34.♕g4+ ♗g6 35.♕e6+. **34.♕g4 h6 35.♕f5 ♖c6 36.♘xd5** 1-0.

'He refrained from 1.b3, but developed his queen's bishop on the second move anyway!'

Richard Rapport, a guarantee for original and entertaining play.

ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

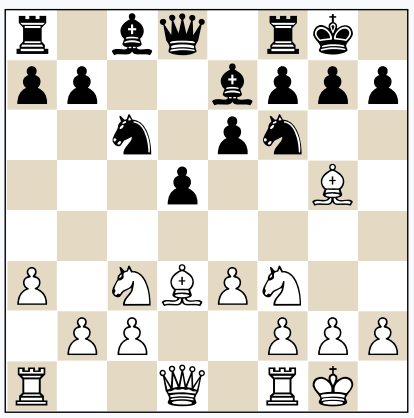
Rapport's next-round win, against a top-player, was far more complex strategically, and not only because his bishop's move was slightly longer!

Richard Rapport
Teimour Radjabov
European Teams Reykjavik 2015

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 d5 3.e3!? c5 4.♘c3 e6 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.a3

A semi-waiting move, inviting Black to develop the bishop before playing dxc5. It will prove useful in an unexpected way on move 11.

6...♗e7 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.♗d3 0-0 9.0-0 ♗e7



With reversed colours this would be a comfortable version of the Chigorin

Defence, but the way it is, White cannot claim an advantage.

10.e4 d4 11.♘a2!?

An unusual but quite favourable trajectory for the knight.

11...e5 The threat of e4-e5, cutting off the d4-pawn from its colleagues, does not give Black the time to restrict the knight with 11...a5.

12.♘b4 ♘d7 13.♗d2 a5 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.b4!

I like this move, cutting the connection between Black's pawns.

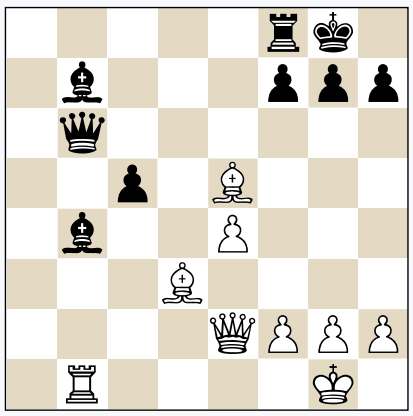
15...axb4 16.axb4

Objectively, equality is maintained in a quiet position, but White's more harmonious regrouping entitles him to hope that he may squeeze something out of the interesting queenside structure in the long run.

16...♗b7 17.♕e2 ♕b6

Radjabov tries to exploit the relative weakness of the b4-pawn, but his plan will end up spoiling his coordination a bit. A simpler plan was 17...c5 18.b5 ♕c7 19.♖fb1 ♘b6 20.c4, with complete equality in a blocked position.

18.c3 ♖xa1 19.♖xa1 dxc3 20.♗xc3 ♗xb4 21.♖b1 c5 22.♘xe5 ♘xe5 23.♗xe5



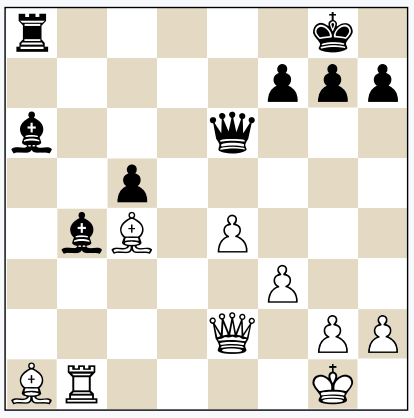
White's patience and consistency has yielded the first fruits. Material is equal and there are few pawns left on the board, but his position is more pleasant – or at least easier to play. The point is that the c5-pawn is not only immobile, but also keeps the b4-bishop out of play.

23...♖e8 24.♗a1 ♕e6

24...c4? won't work due to 25.♕b2, winning the bishop.

Black's last move is meant to prepare for neutralizing the d3-bishop with ...♗a6, but this will prove tactically unsound. More consistent was 24...♗c8, followed by ...♗e6.

25.f3 ♖a8 26.♗c4 ♗a6



Radjabov must have thought he was close to equality, but the next move marks the start of a series of intermediate moves that yields White a strong initiative.

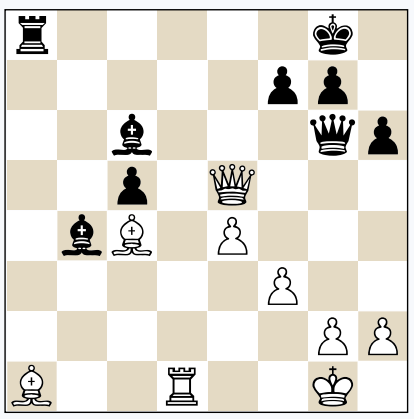
27.♕b2! Forcing Black to release the pressure on c4, thus allowing White's next move.

27...♕g6 28.♕a2! ♗b7 29.♖d1!

White activates his pieces with tempo. The queen is taboo due to the back rank weakness, and the immediate threat is 30.♕xa8+!.

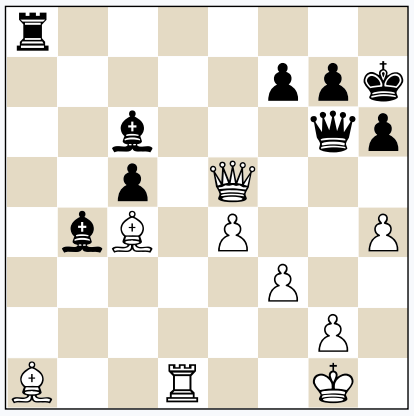
29...h6 30.♕b2 Threatening 31.♖d7.

30...♗c6 31.♕e5!

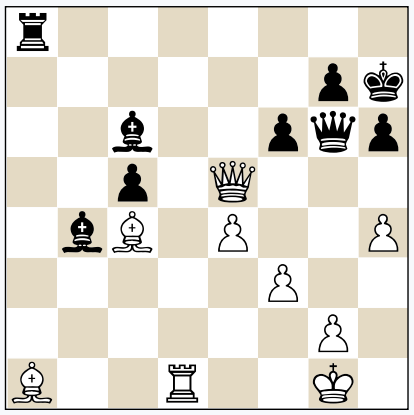


The forced sequence has been crowned by success. Even though the threat 32.♖d6 is not real in view of 32...♖xa1+, White's domination is annoying. The b4-bishop is badly missed in the defence.

31...♔h7 32.h4! Not only clearing the h2-square for the king but also threatening to win the f7-pawn with h4-h5, while taking the g5-square away from the enemy queen.



32...f6 After 32...h5 33.♕e7 f6 34.♗f7, without the insertion of h2-h4 and ...h7-h6, Black could have held on with ...♕g5, but the way it is he is just lost: 34...♕g3 (or if 34...♕h6 35.♗e6, with a decisive attack) 35.♗xf6! gxf6 36.♗e6+ ♕g7 (36...♔h8 37.♖d8+ ♖xd8 38.♕xd8+ either mates or wins the queen: 38...♔h7 39.♗f5+ ♔g7 40.♕e7+ ♔g8 41.♗e6+ ♔h8 42.♕f8+ ♔h7 43.♗f5+) 37.♗f5+ Black cannot avoid losing the loose c6-bishop: 37...♔h8 38.♖d8+ ♖xd8 39.♕xd8+ ♕g8 40.♕xf6+, with two extra pawns and a continuing attack.



33.♕c7! The start of a new series of accurate moves, getting the most out of Black's lack of coordination.

33...♗e8 34.♗e6 ♔h8 35.♕b7! Forcing the rook to abandon the back rank in order to deliver the decisive threat on the next move.

35...♖a3 36.♕e7! 1-0. There is no adequate defence against 37.♕f8+.

I really hope and believe that the future will add many more original and entertaining wins to Ricsi's games collection. ■

chess24®

EXPAND YOUR CHESS

USE THE VOUCHER CODE
LEARN-FROM-GRANDMASTERS AND GET AN **80% DISCOUNT** ON ANY VIDEO SERIES - FOR EXAMPLE, GET **"A REPERTOIRE AGAINST 1.D4. PART 4: SIDELINES BY JAN GUSTAFSSON"** FOR ONLY **2.40** EUR INSTEAD OF **11.99!***

chess24®
VOUCHER CODE:
LEARN-FROM-GRANDMASTERS

***Valid until 24/12/2017**

source: pixabay

Sadler on Books

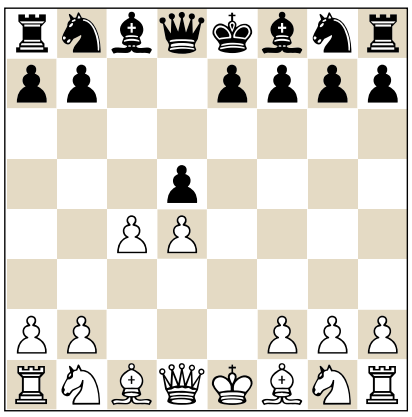
Genius and tragedy

In his enthusiasm MATTHEW SADLER allots five stars to two of the books he read on a family visit to France. Remarkable biographical works about brilliant and tragic heroes of our game.

There's no rest for a chess book reviewer. Even in the middle of the holiday period, my letterbox was still working overtime! *e3 Poison* by Axel Smith (Quality Chess) arrived just before I set off for my annual all-you-can-eat trip to see my relatives in France. The subject of the book (Axel Smith's second for Quality Chess, after his very well-received *Pump up your Rating*) is a White repertory, using systems in which the move e2-e3 is played before developing the dark-squared bishop. Smith explains in the first chapter, 'The Post-Theoretical Era', that his chosen repertoire is '1.♘f3 and 2.e3 with options of varying the order from the very first move'. I spent a great deal of time during my holiday studying the book, but I'm afraid that at the end of the day – despite the large number of interesting ideas – I decided that I really didn't like it. That conclusion still held after re-reading it at home afterwards.

The first feeling I had was that I could barely follow which lines Smith was recommending. Nuggets of essential information were spread – almost hidden you might say – all over the book. For example, I found just three quick references to Smith's preferred repertoire move order: once at the bottom of the first page of the first chapter, once in the middle of Chapter 9 and once in the first paragraph of Chapter 10. In between, there is some confusing stuff. First of all, in Chapter 3 Smith explains that he started to use the *e3 Poison* repertoire more often from May 2016 onwards and presents this game against Goganov from Stockholm as an example:

1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4



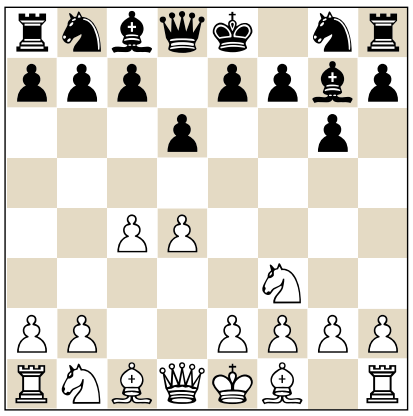
For a book advocating a repertoire based around the move e3, there was something that looked suspiciously like e4 in there. Of course, this opening ends up moving to something reachable via an e3 repertoire, but this warranted at least some explanation at the beginning of the book. We only get to see the link between a 1.♘f3 / 2.e3 repertoire and this position in Chapter 11!

Secondly, between Chapters 1 and 10, Smith presents five chapters (Chapters 4-8) in which the first move is 1.d4. A number of these chapters still baffle me. Why does Smith spend a whole chapter analysing the Anti-Benko, 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c5 3.d5, where the move e3 never comes into play? Another example of something that confused me was the reference to the Georgian grandmaster Tamaz Gelashvili as one of the 'heroes' of e3 systems. I agree that he has played 1.♘f3 / 2.e3 extensively, but more often than not following up with 3.b3, which is not an approach recommended by Smith (a missed chance by Smith in my opinion – b3 systems in which Black no longer has the chance to play ...e5 are well worth investigating). Looking further into the book, I counted no less than three recommended systems against the QGA (1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4) via various transpositions: a system with a3 via a Tarrasch transposition, an anti-QGA system avoiding d2-d4 in Chapter 16 and a full-blown IQP with an a4 line in Chapter 18. I could go on, but I think you get the idea.

Looking at the analysis itself, from time to time I got a feeling of playing through a collection of last-minute preparation sprints. You know how it goes: you want to play something against an opponent, but you suddenly notice just before the game starts that you haven't covered one of his lines. So, you look through current theory with an engine, find a line that looks a bit OK boosted by a couple of tactical finds from the engine, and go for it. For example, in the chapter on the Reversed King's Indian Attack, Smith has a little section (half of page 59)

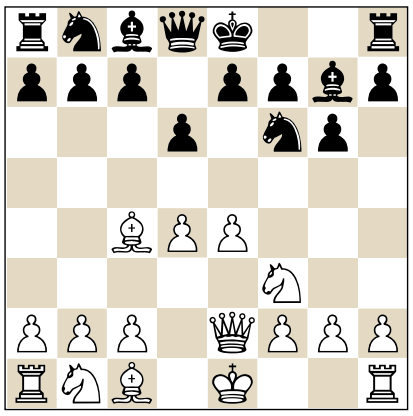
explaining that e3 systems are not very good against the Modern.

After 1.d4 g6 2.♘f3 ♗g7 3.c4 d6



Black's flexibility with his knight on g8 gives him the opportunity to play a Leningrad (...f5) or play ...♘d7, ...e5 and ...♘e7 and follow up with a quick ...f5 if White goes e3. Smith isn't happy at all with White's chances. For that reason, Smith recommends 'taking a step away from our desired setup and playing 2.e4, a move that avoids the King's Indian for sure.' The following set-up can be played after a one-minute lesson:

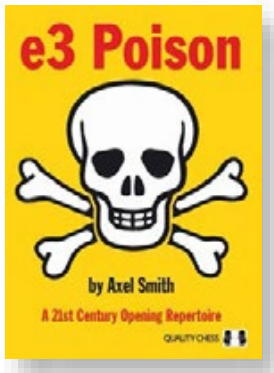
1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♗c4 ♘f6 5.♕e2



Funnily enough, Magnus played this (not very convincingly) against his first-round opponent at the World Cup! This system is all very well, but what about 1...d6? After 2.e4 ♘f6 you're into a Pirc, and 2.♘f3 g6 3.e4 ♘f6 doesn't let you get into this system.

I think that perhaps the most valuable insight is hidden away in Chapter 3 in a little Question and Answer format section: 'this repertoire should not be the first you ever have'. For example, this type of book

e3 Poison
by Axel Smith,
Quality Chess, 2017
★★☆☆☆



would be ideal for a 1.e4 player looking to broaden out his repertoire into 1.d4-ish lines without having to swallow a couple of volumes of ECO first. If he already played the Panov system against the Caro-Kann (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4) then he could reuse that knowledge to play lines like 1.♘f3 d5 2.e3 c5 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 ♘c6 5.c4 as recommended by Smith. The greater your general

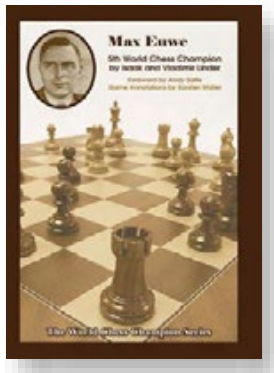
'It's all the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order'

knowledge, the more likely you are to be able to reuse knowledge from other lines. To be honest, this is something you are more likely to find in a professional player than a club player.

In conclusion, a very mixed bag. Reading it made me think of the Morecambe and Wise / André Previn sketch (sorry, very British reference there!) which ends with the classic line 'It's all the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order.' My feeling is that Smith has attempted something impossible in this book – to cover all the possible transpositional options from White's four possible starting options (1.d4, 1.c4, 1.e3, 1.♘f3) – and that the impossibility of the task has defeated him in the end. There's a really good book on 1.♘f3 / 2.e3 somewhere in there, but the organisation of the material is too chaotic to bring that out properly.

■ ■ ■

Max Euwe 5th World Champion
by Isaak and Vladimir Linder
Russell Enterprises, 2017
★★★☆☆



My holiday wasn't just being spent studying opening theory! A number of very welcome historical books also went with me to France. The first was *Max Euwe 5th World Champion* by Isaak and Vladimir Linder (Russell Enterprises). In a previous column, I reviewed the same authors' work on Alexander Alekhine very favourably. For me – as a non-Russian reader – the many vignettes about the minor Russian players of Alekhine's era, and the Russian chess life of that time, were a big treat. This work on Max Euwe is enjoyable but less remarkable in my opinion. I imagine that Western readers already know a fair amount about Euwe and the Western players around him already. In particular, anyone who has read Alexander Münninghoff's excellent biography of Euwe won't find much new here. I fear also that a critical reader may find some inaccuracies to annoy him in the book. For example, in the section on Richard Réti, it is stated that Capablanca didn't lose a single game in the next ten years after losing to Réti at New York 1924. I think that Alekhine may disagree and, for God's sake, don't tell Edward Winter! Of course, reading a book like this on holiday, the things that stick in your mind are the amusing stories that may or may not be true. I particularly liked this one: 'Once, World Champion Euwe was sitting in front of a passenger on a train who was analysing a position on a pocket chess set. Soon a conversation started. The new acquaintance asked Euwe if he could play chess and, after getting a positive answer, offered to play Euwe a game. By the time they had reached

the final destination, Euwe had won three games. Gathering his bags, the passenger kept wondering: 'This is unbelievable! To lose three games to someone on a train! And it happened to me! To me, whom people are calling "Our club's Euwe!"' All in all, somewhere between 2 or 3 stars, but I enjoyed seeing Euwe's games again so we'll bump it up to 3!

■ ■ ■

A few weeks ago, I was surprised to get a Facebook message from a former Kent junior, Ilan Rubin. He had started up a publishing company (Elk and Ruby) and had just translated and published *The Rise and Fall of David Bronstein* by Genna Sosonko (which had first appeared in a Russian edition in 2014; the book is available only via Amazon). Would I like a review copy? Both the subject and the writer appealed enormously, so of course I agreed. Yesterday I got my copy through the post, and having finished the book today I'm wondering why Genna wrote such a short book. Hmm, well actually it's 266 pages, so I guess it must just be rather addictive!

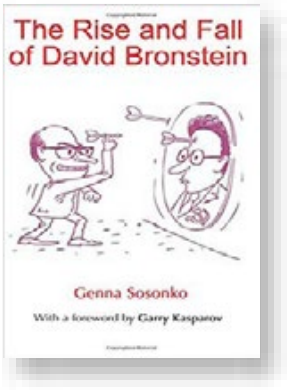
First of all, we should let Genna describe his approach to the book:

'Thinking back to my time with Bronstein, I would like to talk not so much about an outstanding chess player, but about him as a person. Knowing very well that an individual is an inseparable whole, I have nevertheless attempted to separate the great player from an extraordinary person plagued by his own weaknesses and insecurities.

'This book is based on my conversations with him and the recollections of those people who knew a teenager in Kiev they called "the Kid". Alas, very few of them are still around.

'I also pass the mic to his colleagues, his co-authors, friends and even his enemies. Grandmasters who played against him in the 1950s also get their say, although hardly any of them are still alive today. Those who peaked in the late twentieth century talk about him too here. Even they are now veterans.

The Rise and Fall of David Bronstein by Genna Sosonko
Elk and Ruby, 2017
★★★★★



'I show him from a number of angles, taking a step back and then approaching him from a different side, attempting to explain his motives.'

As you can gather, this is not a biography in the traditional sense. The 15 chapters (14 chapters and an epilogue) are arranged in roughly chronological order, but in each chapter the emphasis is on conveying Bronstein's state of mind rather than recounting all the events of his life. The first chapter ('Regrets, I've had a few') starts with a few pages of fragments from conversations with Bronstein, and Chapter 13 ('Minsk') ends with another twelve pages of telephone conversations with Bronstein in the last few years of his life, after he moved to Minsk, where his wife Tatyana was living.

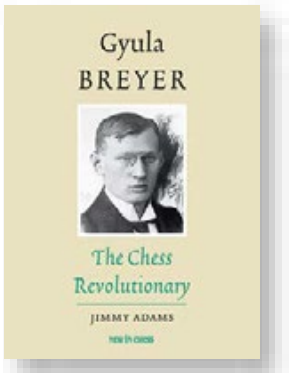
I don't think I have ever read a story that gripped me more than this one. Firstly, Sosonko does a wonderful job of conveying the atmosphere of Soviet (chess) society from the 1940s onwards. I've just finished two books based around that era: *Stalin and the Scientists: A History of Triumph and Tragedy, 1905-1953*, which examines the life and work of a plethora of scientists in Stalin's era, and Julian Barnes' novel about the life of the Russian composer Dimitri Shostakovich (*The Noise of Time*). The same barely credible combination of great achievements against a background of (well-grounded) fear and suspicion shines through all these books. Secondly, it is a powerful, tragic story of a man held captive by the memories of his greatest failure. Every page of the book – just like Bronstein's conversations as recounted by Sosonko, and confirmed by many of his colleagues – breathes one obsession: Botvinnik, and in particular the lost 23rd game of the World Championship Match in 1951. The tragedy of Bronstein's life was in so many ways so enviable. Almost winning a match against Botvinnik at the age of 27! To regret is of course human – you know, I still have intermittent nightmares about my third-round match in the World Championship KO in Groningen 1997 (utterly pathetic in comparison to Bronstein's achievement). And yet, it seems that the tiny gap that Bronstein could not cross to fulfil that destiny was infinitesimally more painful to him than the chasm separating me from the World Championship was to me.

At some stage, I did wonder whether it was quite right to be reading this. So many personal, contradictory, brilliant, incomprehensible, bitter, despairing thoughts – it felt like eavesdropping. With typical honesty, Sosonko also confesses some doubts: 'My heart began to ache at those words, however, and a powerful thought pierced my mind: "why did I write all that stuff about this great chess player who suffered so much at the end of his life? What was the point of all that philosophizing and those attempted explanations? Who was that all for?" You see, I knew deep down that I shouldn't have tried to recall anything. I should have left the departed alone in their graves and should have allowed the living to keep their illusions.'

At the end of the day, my feeling is that many wonderful works of literature would not have been written if this principle had been followed. There are darker periods in your life when you reflect about the choices you have made, where you bemoan your waning powers and the chances you missed when you were still young and strong, when certain thoughts and regrets won't leave you however hard you try, and when you look back and are gripped by the fear that your proudest achievements were worth too little. This book describes it all, and says it all through the turbulent life of an exceptionally brilliant chess player and equally complex personality. Five shining stars!

■ ■ ■

Gyula Breyer
by Jimmy Adams
New In Chess,
2017
★★★★★

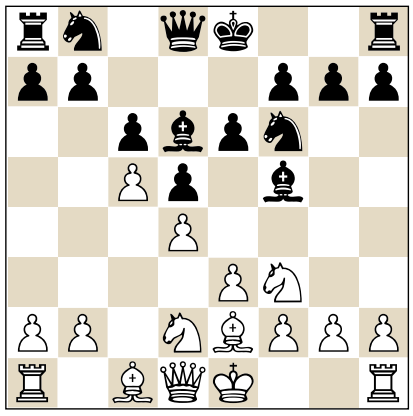


And just in case you didn't feel I'd worked hard enough, I also wrestled my way through Jimmy Adams' 876-page epic devoted to the great Hungarian player Gyula Breyer (1893-1921). I say wrestled, it was an enormous pleasure! I had a reasonable acquaintance with Breyer's games, partly due to owning a copy of Ivan Bottlik's excellent (German-language) book. However, I feel I've got just a little more out of this English-language book!

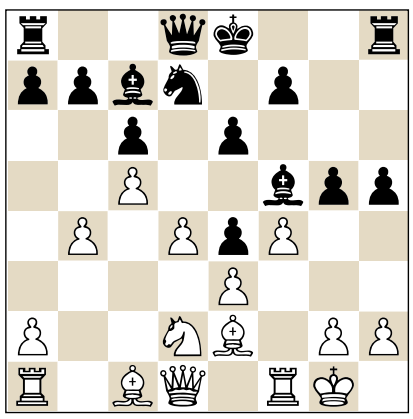
Breyer must have been an amazing person. Suffering from serious heart disease all his life and an engineer by profession, he died young, at the age of 28, but was still an enormously productive chess writer and an extremely strong and original chess player and thinker. Not only that, he held the world blindfold chess record (he took on 25 opponents in January 1921, just pipping his friend Réti's 24-board effort) and also composed some astonishing puzzles (retrograde analysis puzzles such as 'how does White not mate?').

For this book, Adams has drawn together 240 of his games and many of his newspaper and magazine articles, many of which are translated into English for the very first time. He wrote beautifully – it's quite amazing that 90 years on, a player's musings about chess still seem fresh and thought-provoking. I particularly enjoyed his article on the mathematical value of pieces (a mistaken concept in Breyer's view) and a very original way of assigning mathematical values to squares. As for his games, despite his poor health, he was an uncompromising fighter – his play reminds me of Pillsbury's in that regard – and he produced some stunning games. The following is my absolute favourite.

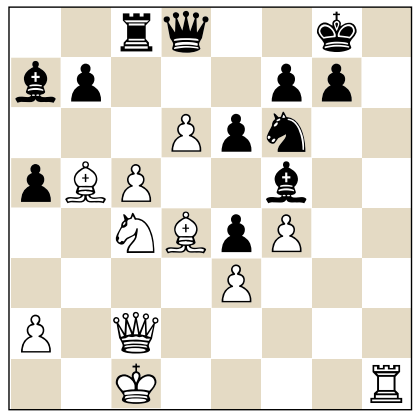
Gyula Breyer
Kornel Havasi
Budapest 1918
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘d2 d5 3.e3 ♗f5 4.c4 c6 5.♘gf3 e6 6.♗e2 ♗d6 7.c5



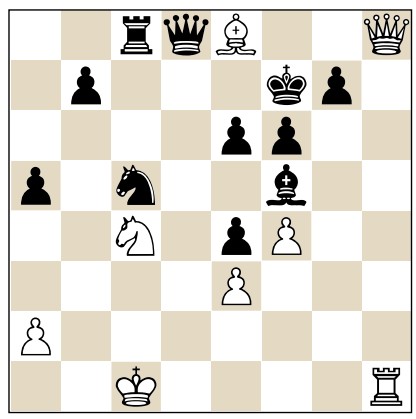
As you can see, Breyer had his own thoughts about how to handle Queen's Pawn openings! When lesser-mortals tried it (against gods, it must be admitted) the results were less impressive, see Kmoch-Alekhine, Vienna 1922: 6...♘bd7 7.0-0 ♗d6 8.c5 ♗c7 9.b4 ♘e4 10.♘xe4 dxe4 11.♘d2 h5 12.f4 g5



(No, Alekhine didn't hang around!) 13.g3 ♘f6 14.♗b2 gxf4 15.exf4 h4 16.♕b3 hxg3 17.hxg3 ♘d5 18.♘c4 ♘xf4 19.♖ae1 ♕g5 20.d5 ♘d3 0-1.
Back to our game.
7...♗c7 8.b4 ♘bd7 9.♗b2 ♘e4 10.♘xe4 dxe4 11.♘d2 ♘f6 12.g4
Not so unusual now, but just think this was played almost 100 years ago!
12...♗g6 13.h4 h5 14.gxh5 ♘xh5 15.♕c2 ♘f6 16.0-0-0 ♗f5 17.♖dg1 ♔f8 18.h5 a5 19.b5 cxb5 20.♗xb5 ♖xh5 21.d5
It all comes together!
21...♖xh1 22.♖xh1 ♔g8 23.d6 ♗b8 24.♘c4 ♗a7 25.♗d4 ♖c8 26.f4



Another gorgeous move, opening the path of the queen to the h-file.
26...♗xc5 27.d7
And why not keep going?
27...♘xd7 28.♕h2 f6 29.♗xc5 ♘xc5 30.♕h8+ ♔f7 31.♗e8+



A stylish end that certainly caught me by surprise! Black resigned facing the choice between 31...♕xe8 32.♘d6+ and 31...♔e7 32.♕xg7+ ♔xe8 33.♖h8 mate. Irresistible play, and a great book! Five stars! ■

'Despite his poor health, Gyula Breyer was an uncompromising fighter – his play reminds me of Pillsbury's.'

Just Checking

Evgeny Miroshnichenko

CURRENT ELO: 2606

DATE OF BIRTH: December 28, 1978

PLACE OF BIRTH: Donetsk, Ukraine

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Moscow, Russia

What is your favourite city?
Brussels is surely on the list.

What was the last great meal you had?
In Tbilisi, Dinehall restaurant, recently – delicious Georgian food and fantastic company.

What drink brings a smile to your face?
Let it be coffee, but a single malt whisky would do as well (if you're looking for *that* kind of smile ☺).

Which book would you give to a friend?
The Compromise by Sergey Dovlatov.

What book is currently on your bedside table?
Books by Terry Pratchett, Alexander Genis and (surprise!) Boris Gelfand.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Dead Man by Jim Jarmusch.

And your favourite TV series?
Black Books; close second *House MD*.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Johnny Depp.

And a favourite actress?
Jodie Foster.

What music are you currently listening to?
A little bit of everything. Kris Kristofferson is one of my latest discoveries.

Is there a painting that moves you?
The Chocolate Girl (Jean-Etienne Liotard).

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Garry Kasparov. He's simply the greatest.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Alexander Kotov's books on Alexander Alekhine.

What was your best result ever?
There've been a few decent results, but I'd say winning the Ukrainian Championship in 2003 was especially satisfying.

And the best game you played?
My win against Kobalia in Ohrid 2001.

What is your favourite square?
e5, and please don't ask me why ☺.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
The method of exclusion and logical analysis in general.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
Not anymore, but I would probably still use the same 'lucky pen'.

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or?
Facebook.

How many friends do you have on Facebook?
Roughly 3K.

What is your life motto?
This too shall pass.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Treat people the way you want them to treat you.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Steve Davis, Hugh Laurie, Dylan Moran.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
As many languages as possible, to improve my snooker play, and wouldn't mind to learn to play the guitar.

When were you happiest?
On August 2, 2010, when Miro Junior was born.

Where is your favourite place in the world?
My parents' house, a long time ago, me and my sisters unpacking gifts under the Christmas tree. It's gone, doesn't exist anymore, but I wish I could go back to this place...

What is your greatest fear?
The health and well-being of the people closest to me.

How do you relax?
Dinner with a good friend, a billiards session, a walk in the park or a good book at home.

What does it mean to be a chess player?
Basically it means you'll never escape the trap – the game will be with you till the end of your days. This defines the difference between 'playing chess' and 'being a chess player'.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Not much. Obviously it has an impact on everyday life, I'm just not sure if I'd call it 'useful'.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
The winner is the player who makes the next-to-last mistake – S. Tartakower.

Club players don't need to study hundreds of pages of theory

Understanding structures and finding tactics are much more important than memorizing variations. Renowned German chess trainers IM Erik Zude and GM Jörg Hickl have created the ideal club player's repertoire for Black: a set of lines that is conveniently limited in scope, yet varied, solid and complete.

The core repertoire is based on lines that the authors have successfully played at (grand)master level for decades: the Antoshin Variation of the Philidor Defence against 1.e4 and the Old-Indian Defence against 1.d4. There is only a limited number of plans, ideas and structures that you need to learn, and very few forcing variations.

paperback | 208 pages | €22.95 | available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com | a NEW IN CHESS publication

Chess at ICC

The best online chess experience there is.
Clean, brilliant & smart. *iOS and Android*

Chess Videos
Every Russian Schoolboy Knows: Easy Come Easy Go - A story of Modern Opening Preparation - part 4
Improve Your Chess: Tactical R&P Endgame
World Championship Match - Game 10
World Championship Match - Game 9
Attack with LarryC: Back to the Future!
Seek Graph
02:36
02:35
GM Alex Yermolinsky

Download on the App Store

ICC
chessclub.com